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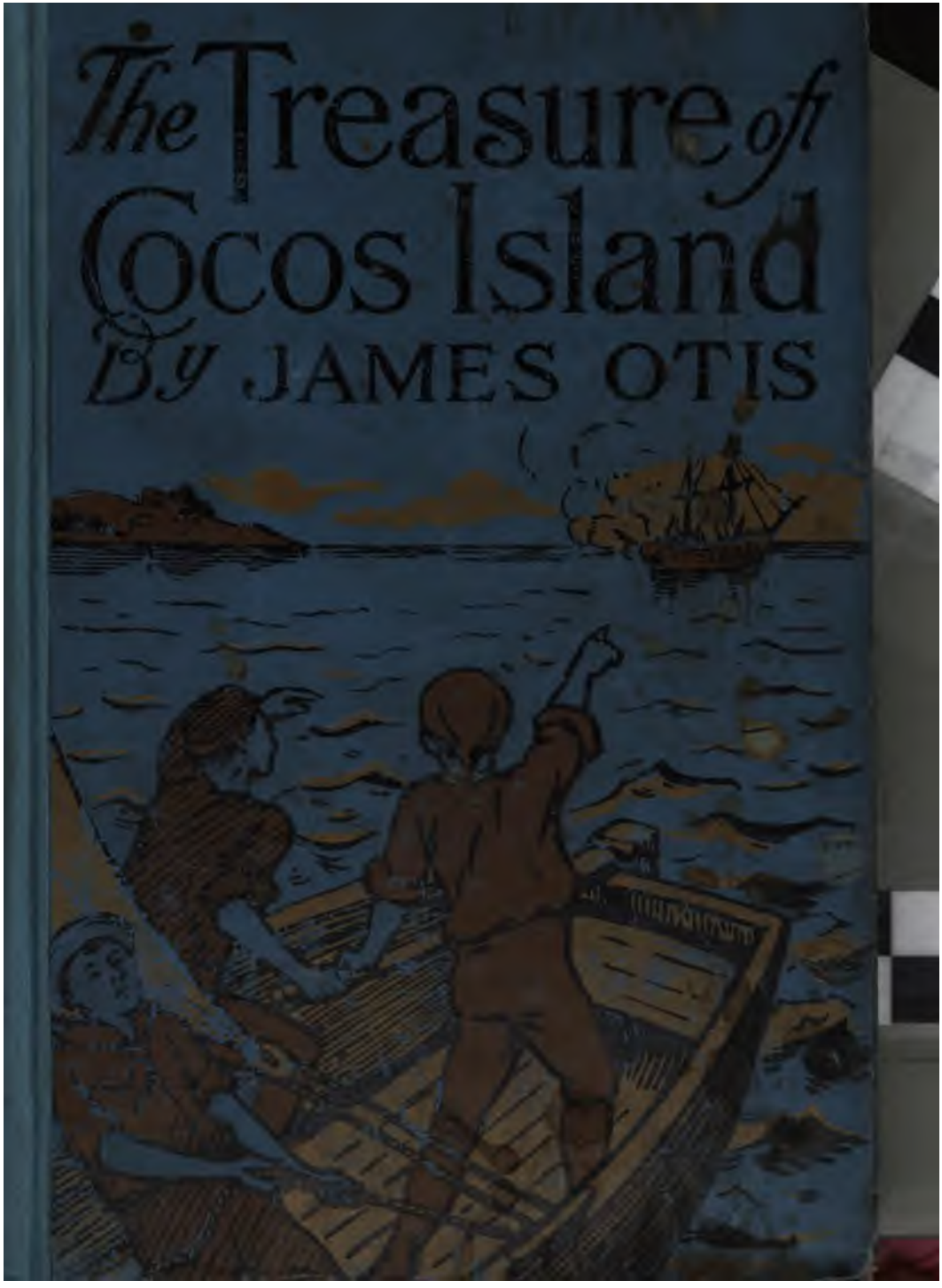
The Treasure of Cocos Island

By JAMES OTIS



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Joe fell on his knees and began digging with both hands. "We have found it, lads! We have found it!" he exclaimed.—Page 332.

The Treasure of Cocos Island.

THE TREASURE OF

COCOS ISLAND

A STORY OF THE INDIAN OCEAN

By JAMES OTIS

Author of "A Runaway Brig," "The Search for the Silver City," "Jack the Hunchback," etc., etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY J. WATSON DAVIS

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NOTES

"The Quichua and Aymara, or the Inca Indians, have no relations or sympathies with the Indians of the plains, who in their turn hold the civilized Indians in great contempt. These descendants of the Peruvians under the empire of the Incas are still numerous, notwithstanding the many causes which have tended to diminish their numbers, and form a distinct race, preserving the language and manners of their ancestors, their habits having been only somewhat modified by the circumstances in which they have been placed since they came under the dominion of the Spaniards. The Quichuas are mild in character, apparently subdued and apathetic—qualities which are but the natural result of the state of subjection and debasement in which they were long held by their conquerors. They are, however, robust and muscular, and capable of great endurance, though little inclined to labor. Their customs are rude and simple, their mode of living poor in the extreme. The Aymaras are perhaps more mobile in character, but in other respects similar." (*Encyclopædia Britannica,* Vol. IV, pp. 14, 15.)

"Keeling Islands, or Cocos Islands, also called by Horsburgh the Borneo Coral Islands, a group in the Indian Ocean, about six hundred miles south of the coast of Sumatra, in 12° 5′ S. lat. and 90° 55′ E. long., well known as having furnished Mr. Darwin with the typical example of an atoll or lagoon island. There are altogether twenty-three small islands, nine and a half miles being the greatest width of the whole atoll. The lagoon is very shallow, and the passages between many of the islands of such trifling depth that it is possible to 'walk at low tide with some slight wading all the way from Direction Island to West Island.' An opening on the northern side of the reef permits the entrance of vessels into the northern part of the lagoon, which forms a good harbor known as Port Refuge, or Port Albion. . . . The climate is temperate and extremely healthy. Terrific storms sometimes break over the islands, and it has been more than once visited by earthquakes.

"The Keeling Islands were discovered in 1609 by William Keeling on his way home from the Moluccas. In 1823 Alexander Hare, an English adventurer, settled on the southmost island with a number of slaves. Some two or three years after, a Scotchman, J. Ross, who had commanded a brig during the English occupation of Java, settled with his family

on Direction Island, and his little colony was soon strengthened by Hare's runaway slaves. The Dutch Government had in an informal way claimed possession of the islands since 1829; but they refused to allow Ross to hoist the Dutch flag, and accordingly the place was taken under British protection in 1856. In 1878 it was attached to the government of Ceylon."

THE TREASURE OF COCOS ISLAND

CHAPTER I.

OLD MANUEL'S STORY.

"We buried gold and silver, coined and in shape of ornaments and vessels, to such value that even a king might envy the possessor of the hoard, and there it is to-day on a lonely island in the Indian Ocean. What is more likely, there it will remain until some shipwrecked sailor comes upon it by chance, for but few of us live who outwitted Spain in '21."

It was old Manuel Telceda who made this startling assertion on a certain evening in early spring of the year 1880 to the only resident of Fairhaven who visited his lonely dwelling amid the sand-dunes.

This visitor was a boy, just turned fifteen years of age, by name Winslow Burbridge, better known among his friends and acquaintances as "Winn."

During six years or more old Manuel, as the village people called him, had resided in this dwelling erected by himself, which was hardly more than a

shanty, where he could look out over the broad Atlantic, and this last appeared to be his only occupation.

The "foreigner," as he was at first designated, had suddenly made his appearance in the village, coming from no one knew where and giving no explanation as to the purpose of his visit.

During forty-eight hours he remained a guest at the Fairhaven Inn and then disappeared for a time—left the town, so the gossips said—until a few days later, when it was learned that he had built this shanty from the wreckage cast up by the sea.

Here he lived alone, fishing during seasonable weather, but never attempting to dispose of the results of his labor, save when he presented his first and only acquaintance in Fairhaven, Winn Burbridge, with an exceptionally fine cod-fish or half a dozen mackerel.

After a time Winn was invited to accompany the old man on his fishing trips, and the acquaintance between the two rapidly ripened into friendship. But it was not until on the evening mentioned that Telceda had given any hint as to his past life.

A northeast gale was driving the ocean surge high up on the beach with thunderous roar; the rain was beating against the frail dwelling as if to demolish it, and the burning wood in the spacious fireplace of

rough stone and clay was sending forth a cheery blaze.

It was such an evening as invited confidences. Winn had come down to the shanty during the forenoon, when the storm had but just begun, intending to return shortly to the only place in all the world he could call home—the poor-farm. But, as the gale increased, his host insisted that it would be folly to attempt to make his way over the two miles of marsh and scrub oak which lay between the coast and Fairhaven's home for paupers.

During the earlier days of their acquaintance the old man had learned the boy's sad history by dint of much questioning, and it was not a long task, owing to the poverty of detail.

Winn's parents died before he was old enough to realize that he owned in this world even an existence, and his first and only recollections were regarding life in the Fairhaven poor-farm. He had always been required to perform such labor as was within his power, and only during stormy weather, when out-of-door work was impossible, or in the winter months after his in-door tasks had been performed, did he have an opportunity of visiting the one person whom he could call a friend.

The gossips of Fairhaven said many harsh things concerning old Manuel. Some insisted that he had

been a pirate, even though the time was long since passed when such a career of crime could be pursued. Others professed to believe him a fugitive from justice, although he made no effort at concealment, and all united by saying, if not believing, that the "foreigner" was "no better than he should be."

During his early acquaintance with Telceda such gossip—and he heard it even at the poor-farm—had annoyed Winn Burbridge, causing him to stand up manfully for his only friend; but older grown, he treated the calumnies with silent contempt, believing firmly in the integrity of the man who received him as a companion. So perfect was this faith that Winn never so much as asked a question concerning his host's life, and Manuel had not volunteered any information until on this stormy evening, when, supper having been eaten, both were seated before the fire, the old man smoking in apparent content, and the boy from the poor-farm building air-castles by aid of the glowing embers.

Then it was that Manuel said:

"We buried gold and silver, coined and in shape of ornaments and vessels, to such value that even a king might envy the possessor of the hoard, and there it is to-day on a lonely island in the Indian Ocean. What is more likely, there it will remain until some shipwrecked sailor comes upon it by

chance, for there are but few of us alive to-day who outwitted Spain in '21."

Winn looked up in startled surprise as he exclaimed:

"You buried gold and silver?"

"Aye, lad, to the value of more millions of dollars than you could count on the fingers of one hand."

"If I had even so much as two dollars, it would stay in my pocket instead of being buried."

"I doubt you not, lad, and why? If you had so small a sum it might safely remain in your pocket; but this of which I speak was the treasure of my people, and when, during the War for Independence, it seemed certain Spain would be victorious, we had but one choice if we would save our wealth. Had we not buried it on that lonely island, the oppressors might have taken it and demanded indemnity besides."

"But the war begun in '61, not '21."

"And do you think, lad, that the wars in this country are the only ones in the world? From 1810 until 1823 the people of Venezuela fought to free themselves from the grasp of the oppressors, as your people did in '76."

"Was you alive in 1821?"

"Aye, lad, very much so. A boy ten years old generally has a good idea of whether he is alive or

not, and that was my age when the Aymara treasure was buried. It is now April of 1880, and I have lived in this world sixty-nine years. Something of a sailor I was, even though so young, and allowed to join those who buried the treasure because, while acting as cabin-boy, I could come nigh to doing a seaman's duty. We dreamed of a new home somewhere in the Pacific Ocean, where we, the Aymaras, descendants of the Incas, might live free and independent as had our ancestors. The search which we made was a long one, if I remember rightly, and I took but little heed of time in those days. It was nearly three years from the day we left our native land until the leaders of the party decided upon a hiding-place for the treasure, and during all those months we were afloat. There are many islands in the Pacific Ocean, as mayhap you know, but no one pleased us, and only when the brig was well down in the Indian Ocean did we hit upon that spot of land which seemed to serve our purpose.

"On Cocos, one of the Keeling Islands, we buried that which we could not keep, intending to return with our people and there found a colony. Twenty days later—it may have been more and it may have been less, but certain it was thereabouts—the brig was wrecked, and of the thirty-four to whom the Aymara treasure was entrusted only six

remained alive, and I, the most helpless of them all, among the number.

"There is no profit either to you or me, lad, in going over the story of what we suffered in an open boat for so long a time, that we ceased to note when one day was ended and a new one began; but as many years elapsed before I saw my home again, as were spent in searching for an abiding-place, and then all whom I knew and loved were dead, killed with arms in their hands, or starved into subjection, which is but another name for death."

The old man fell silent until Winn, eager to hear more of this treasure, asked excitedly:

"Did you leave the money there, Manuel, and never try to get any part of it?"

"Aye, that I did, lad, and from good cause. Suppose I were to give you the exact location of that treasure, and say you had only to land on the island in order to gain possession of it, how might it be done?"

"By me, do you mean?"

"Aye, lad, by you. Knowing as much as I, how might you get at the wealth?"

"I couldn't without a vessel and men to sail her."

"No more can I, and here I remain stranded on this shore with mayhap the few dollars in my pocket

which will serve to buy what little I need while life remains."

"But there are plenty of people who would willingly fit out a vessel, if so much was to be gained."

"I doubt it not, my boy; but who shall tell these men?"

"You, of course."

"And thus aid in robbing my people?"

"How can they be robbed when they are dead? You said only six came out alive from the wreck?"

"Yes, lad; yet it may be that more than I have reckoned are yet in this world, although it is fair that I, being the youngest, should live the longest. The Aymara treasure belongs to the descendants of the Incas, and it is not for me to rob them."

"But if they are all dead?" Winn persisted.

"If they are, even then the treasure is not mine to give away."

"And when you die no one will know of it?"

"Of that I am not so certain, my boy. Since it has come to be my belief that here on the sand-dunes of Fairhaven I shall lay my old bones, there has been the thought that you might become the heir of the Aymara treasure."

"Me!" Winn cried, starting to his feet in surprise and excitement.

Old Manuel's pipe was long since empty, and be-

fore replying to this explanation he filled the bowl with due deliberation; then lighted the particles of tobacco and puffed vigorously until the spark was fanned into a glowing coal, when he said gravely:

"I have turned it over many and many a night, lad, until this has come into my mind: When the time arrives that you have made your way into the world, and earned so much of money as will give you the opportunity of doing what I ask, it shall be your business to visit Cuman, on the coast of Venezuela, to learn of my people. That having been done, and you satisfied they are the rightful owners, you may enlist their aid to recover the Aymara treasure, taking for such service one-fifth part of all that may be found. Lad, that same share will give to you such wealth that if it was in your mind to buy this village of Fairhaven for a toy, you might well indulge the whim."

The poor-house boy was on his feet in a fever of excitement.

The fact that this treasure of which the old man spoke was on a lonely island in the Indian Ocean had no place in his thoughts. He only realized that he might be the heir of the Aymara hoard, and it was as if nothing remained save to stretch out his hand and grasp it.

Both the occupants of the cabin had been so deeply

interested in the conversation that they failed to hear a certain noise from the outside which was not caused by the storm, and therefore were so thoroughly surprised as to be almost frightened when the door was suddenly flung open and two men entered.

Winn recognized in the first Captain James Robinson, master and owner of the schooner "Flying Scud," and in the second Bartholomew Gerry, a resident of Fairhaven, who was not particularly noted for any of the virtues which go toward making up a good citizen.

Captain Jim, as the boys called him, would to Winn have been a welcome visitor at almost any other time, for more than once had the lad from the poor-farm been allowed to make short fishing-cruises on the schooner through the kindness of her master; but in Gerry, Winn fancied he saw an enemy, as did every boy in the town of Fairhaven, because of the fact that he appeared to be ever ready to inflict pain and never willing to favor the younger portion of the population.

It was Gerry who opened the conversation by saying, as he seated himself in front of the fire without awaiting an invitation from the master of the house:

"That wasn't half a bad story you told, Manuel. The captain and I might have knocked until doomsday before you would have heard us, while your

mind was on that subject. How much of the yarn is true?"

"Since it wasn't told for your benefit, there is no necessity for me to explain whether any of it be fact."

"But it so chances we heard all, and are of a mind to know more," Gerry said in a threatening tone, which caused a deep flush to overspread the old man's face, seeing which Captain Jim hastened to say sharply:

"Why is it, Bart, that you can't act the gentleman once in a while? It ain't from lack of bringing up, that I know."

"Perhaps it's because soft speeches don't come as natural to me as to some others."

"I reckon there's more truth than poetry in that," Captain Jim replied grimly, and dismissed the subject by turning toward Manuel as he said, "Yes, we heard the story you told the boy, an' perhaps in the hearing of it did what wasn't just square; but I allow there'll be no great harm, an' some considerable good done, seein's how we're ready to help along in your scheme for makin' Winn a rich man."

"If you were willing to hear what wasn't meant for your ears, you are not the kind of men who could be trusted to aid the boy," Manuel said quickly, evidently striving to keep his temper within bounds.

Gerry appeared to be on the point of making a sharp reply, but Captain Jim checked him as he said, soothingly:

"It wasn't with the idea of worming the secret out of you that we came here to-night, Manuel, for I didn't know you had one. I counted on being able to hire you in the job of beaching the 'Flying Scud,' and on the way met Gerry. It was all an accident, an' seein's how we heard quite a bit of what you said, there has come into my mind the idea that I might do a good turn for myself, at the same time I did one for you."

"I haven't asked a favor of you as yet," old Manuel said, turning toward the fire with an air of irritation.

"I'll admit all that, an' yet you may be willin' to give me a share in this business. There hasn't been time for me to think it all out; but seein's how I'm the owner of the 'Flying Scud,' an' the fishing business has been dull for the year past, I'd like to take a hand in 'most any kind of a venture, an' Bart has got cash enough to put the thing through. You jest the same as said you counted on givin' this secret away to Winn, allowin' him a fifth part of what might be found."

"The treasure, if there is any, belongs to my people," Manuel replied, doggedly.

"That's the way I understood it from the first, and I'm allowin' they shall get it, exceptin', of course, such part as ought to be paid for the findin' of the stuff. Now, if Bart agrees, I'd say we'd take you an' Winn aboard, run down the Venezuelan coast to wherever Cuman may be; find out how many of your folks are still alive, and then go into a regular trade for getting the treasure. If all you say be true, a small percentage of it ought to pay us handsomely for the venture. Here's a chance such as I allow, from what you've told the boy, you've been waitin' to find, an' it comes right to your door."

The look of anger faded from old Manuel's face, and he turned toward his uninvited guests with an air of friendliness.

"Allowing that half the yarn is a fact, I'll put in the cash to fit the 'Flying Scud' out for the voyage to the Keeling Islands," Bart Gerry said promptly. "I ain't what you might call a rich man, but have got enough to make a venture like that, if it so be I see my way clear."

"What I told the boy was no more nor less than the truth," old Manuel said, speaking slowly, as if giving due weight to every word. "It may be that some of my countrymen have already removed the treasure; therefore, should you make a bargain with me, such a chance must be well considered."

"How much in value did you bury?" Gerry asked.

"What would amount to more than five million dollars in your money."

"Do you know whether any of your countrymen have made an attempt to regain the treasure?"

"Three years ago I was certain nothing had been done."

"And then how many were living of the boat's crew that escaped from the wreck of the brig?"

"One other beside myself."

"Where is he now?"

"I don't know."

"What is his name?"

"Petro Garcia."

"Where was he when you saw him last?"

"In this hut."

"Had he ever made any attempt to go to this island of which you have been telling?" Captain Jim asked.

"He, like me, was too poor to make the venture; but he had tried, as we both have, many times."

"He must be an old man, if you were the only boy."

"If alive, he is seventy-three years old."

"Well, the chances are he has pegged out long before this," Gerry added with a laugh, which caused

a frown to gather once more on Manuel's face, but the old man made no reply.

He turned toward the fire again, as if the conversation was ended so far as he was concerned, but Captain Jim was not minded to drop the subject he found so deeply interesting.

"Of course you know exactly where all the money was buried?"

Old Manuel nodded.

"You have counted all along on makin' a trade with somebody for getting it?"

Again Manuel nodded.

"Well, why not make the deal with me? The people of Fairhaven will tell you I am on the square, and, what is more, I'm willin' to take you an' any other three you may choose, in case we find more of your people alive. There can't be much danger of my breaking any agreement we hit upon. Accordin' to your own story, you have given up every hope of getting it, and here is a chance you have looked for all your life in vain. We'll take the risk of starting on the voyage so far as going to Venezuela is concerned, and then if nothing is learned to show that the money has been dug up, we'll keep on, Bart an' I, takin' such a percentage as shall be agreed upon between you an' your countrymen."

"I'll think it over," the old man said, studying the

coals in the fire-place as if believing there he could read the proper answer to the proposal.

"I can't see that there is need of any great study over the matter. You've got nothing to lose and everything to gain. We're the ones who take all the risk."

"I'll think it over," Manuel said, impatiently, and Captain Jim checked the hasty words which it was evident Bart Gerry was about to utter, by saying:

"Of course, it is your right to run the thing after your own fashion. When will you give us an answer?"

"To-morrow morning."

"We'll be here before the tide turns, an' if it so be you're wise enough to take advantage of our offer, we'll beach the schooner at high water. Bart will see to getting the stores; I'll make arrangements with the selectmen to get Winn out of the poor-house, and in less than a week you can be afloat, bound for Venezuela."

"I'll think it over."

Captain Jim was a wise man after his own fashion, and instead of urging old Manuel further he literally forced Bart Gerry to follow him out of the hut.

CHAPTER II.

A BARGAIN.

AFTER Captain Jim and Bart Gerry had left the hut on the sand-dunes Winn turned eagerly toward the old man, believing he was to hear more about the wonderful treasure; but in this he was mistaken.

Manuel sat staring into the fire, the unlighted pipe in his mouth, as if he was the only occupant of the building, and fully half an hour passed in silence, save for the roaring of the wind and beating of the heavy surf outside.

The boy from the poor-farm asked no questions, but waited patiently until it should be Manuel's pleasure to address him, and perhaps it was this habit of his which had first won the old man's friendship, for the guardian of the Aymara treasure often indulged in silence even while Winn was his guest.

When he did finally speak, however, it was on that subject which occupied the boy's mind to the exclusion of everything else.

"The captain of the 'Flying Scud' made a fair offer."

"He's a square man, so 'Squire Kelly says, an' there's nobody in Fairhaven who can put a finger on anything he's ever done that isn't straight," Winn replied stoutly, more than willing to speak a good word for the man who had ever treated him less harshly than did the majority of the citizens of the town.

"I'm not taken with Bart Gerry," old Manuel continued musingly.

"Folks 'round here don't like him over an' above well; but they say he's got quite a pile of money, an' Captain Jim ain't any too well fixed. I s'pose it would cost mighty heavy to send a vessel from here to that island you told about?"

"Indeed it would, lad. It means a two years' cruise for a schooner like the 'Flying Scud,' and stores must be bought for the entire voyage, no matter how much treasure may be taken on board once we are there."

"If you can't do the thing yourself, it seems as if Captain Jim's offer was a good one," Winn suggested, after a brief pause, during which old Manuel gazed at him searchingly, as if trying to read his thoughts.

"So it is, lad, if he can be depended upon. I've never had one-half as much encouragement before, for whenever I have hinted at such an amount of

treasure people have laughed at me, even though it is a matter of history that the Aymaras did carry all their wealth to a distant shore."

"If Captain Jim takes two of your countrymen and you with him, I don't see why you can't depend upon him."

"There are many ways by which he could deprive us of the gold, for at the best we would be but three against a crew of half a dozen or more."

"Wouldn't I count for anything?" Winn asked, hesitatingly, blushing as he spoke. "The captain said he'd see to it that I was cleared from the poor-farm."

"You would count for all that could be expected of an honest lad; but that might be of little avail against such a man as Bart Gerry gives token of being."

"I don't believe Captain Jim would stand still an' let him do anything wrong, after he'd given his word as he offered to do."

"Then you believe I should accept the offer?" old Manuel asked, almost eagerly, as if disposed to throw the weight of the decision upon this boy, who was ignorant of all the world save that portion contained within the limits of Fairhaven.

"Of course I don't know much about what's to be

done; but I'm certain Captain Jim will live up to his word."

"Then it's a bargain," and Manuel relighted his pipe with the air of one who is relieved by having settled a vexed question. "If your captain is willing to bind himself, he shall have a twentieth part of all that may be found. Should we meet any Aymaras who were alive in 1821, then you and I will take the same share, and the remainder shall be delivered to the rightful owners. In case we fail in the search for my people, the shares shall be—— There is no reason why that question should come up now; it will be time enough to decide it after visiting Venezuela."

Winn was nearly breathless with excitement as he asked:

"Do you think it will be possible for Captain Jim to get me free from the poor-farm?"

"That part of the business shouldn't be hard, my lad, and if the officers of this town make any objections to your going, I will take it upon myself to see that you are one of the party, for I am determined not to set sail without you."

Winn would have given words to his gratitude but that old Manuel prevented him by describing the place where the Aymara treasure had remained hidden so many years.

"It is on Cocos Island, the smallest of the Keeling group, that we'll visit, my lad, if the captain holds to his offer, an' that lays in latitude 12° 5′ south, longitude 90° 55′ east."

Winn looked puzzled, as well he might, for this was the first time he had ever heard a location described by such a method.

"I reckon you don't know much about navigation as yet, but it'll soon come into your head after we're at sea. The next time you get hold of an atlas look in the Indian Ocean for the Keeling group. You'll find that one is called Horsburgh, another Keeling, a third Direction, and the others won't be set down as having any names. I can see them in my mind, though, and could almost go blindfolded to the spot where we buried the treasure. At the time the older men of the party made a chart, so there'd be no trouble in finding the hoard when those who had the right should need it; but neither Petro nor I bothered our young heads then very much about such a matter. When he came here two years ago we knew that there were not many days remaining to us in this world, and together drew a map which should guide any one to the place. That I will give to Captain Robinson, after visiting Cuman; but you shall take a copy in case I am not alive when the 'Flying Scud' arrives at Cocos Island."

Then the old man began to discuss the possibilities of the voyage which it was proposed should be made, growing each moment more excited over the prospect of restoring to his people the wealth which their ancestors had saved from the clutches of the enemy, until both he and Winn were heedless of the passage of time.

The rising sun saw them yet seated before the smouldering embers of the fire speculating upon the future, which to them at that moment was by no means a riddle, and here Captain Jim and Bart Gerry found them.

As if it had been previously agreed upon, Gerry did not offer to take any part in the conversation which ensued; but simply made a suggestion here or there when some important detail seemed to have been forgotten.

The tide was nearly at its height when the bargain was finally made and a rough agreement signed by the three men and Winn, old Manuel insisting that the boy should appear as one of the principals in the transaction, although Gerry at first objected to such a course, asking impatiently:

"What is the sense of draggin' a kid into the trade? It's enough if we agree that you an' he take the same amount we do."

"He is to share with me," Manuel said, sharply.

"Well, that's understood."

"In case anything happens to me during the voyage he will stand in my place, therefore his name must appear here as one of the two who have power to make such a bargain as we have just agreed upon."

"But he hasn't that power, as we well know."

"I say he has, for I have given it to him by telling him everything I know concerning the hoard."

"But we must share the secret also," and Bart started to his feet, as if afraid he was to be defrauded in some unexplainable manner.

"You will know all that is necessary to enable us to find the spot where my people hid the treasure; but he shall be told what will serve him after I die, if it should so chance you would break the bargain we have made."

"Why do you quibble about nothing, Bart?" Captain Jim said soothingly, as he gently pushed his friend into the chair. "Manuel will tell all we need about the treasure, an' if Winn knows of other matters it's no concern of ours."

After this controversy Gerry made no further objections against the boy's name appearing on the contract, and once this had been signed the captain said with an air of business:

"It is time to attend to the schooner. We'll

beach her, an' after nightfall, when it is not possible to push ahead with the work, we can hear Manuel's story which is to set us on the track of the Aymara treasure."

"Why don't we get the particulars now?" Gerry asked, in a not very amiable tone.

"Because we can't afford to idle away so much as a day. To-morrow I hope we'll be getting the stores on board, and within two weeks I count on setting sail."

It could plainly be seen that Gerry did not approve of waiting even an hour before hearing the secret; but Captain Jim was determined, and the four set out to aid in hauling the "Flying Scud" up on the beach, for Fairhaven did not boast of a dry-dock. Therefore it was necessary to make all repairs on a craft when she was lying heeled over on the sands.

It was Winn's duty to return to the poor-farm, for his leave of absence had expired; but when he suggested as much Captain Jim said decidedly:

"That part of it is the same as settled, lad. I talked with 'Squire Kelly last night, offering to take you with me as cook, an' he agreed to fix the business with the other selectmen; consequently you're one of my crew, with no other concern about the poor-farm than to go there for what little dunnage you may call your own."

"And he will live with me until we sail," old Manuel added.

"You can settle that part of it to suit yourselves. I made out that I wanted the boy as cook, for Bart an' I've agreed to keep secret the object of our voyage, or even the port we're bound for, else we'd have the whole country 'round our ears, every fool doin' his best to get ahead of us."

Thus it was that Winn Burbridge was released from the poor-farm when he least expected to be free, and thus also did he tacitly agree to act as cook during a voyage to the Indian Ocean, although it is doubtful if he had ever assisted in boiling so much as a potato.

"All hands would starve to death if they counted on me to get the meals," he said to old Manuel at the first opportunity, and the latter reassured him by replying:

"You shall figure as cook, and I'll do the work, for it's somewhat in my line. Captain Robinson has done us a favor by making such an arrangement, otherwise you would be called upon to perform a sailor's duty."

"Which I could do in fairly good style."

"It is much better as the captain has said, and you will so learn before we have been at sea twenty-four hours."

Quite naturally, Winn was in a high state of mental excitement during the ten days which followed the signing of the agreement, for he had never been outside the limits of the town of Fairhaven, and this voyage to the Indian Ocean in search of buried treasure was such an adventure as would have aroused even the most experienced traveler.

The boys of his acquaintance congratulated him warmly on leaving the poor-farm for a berth on board the "Flying Scud"; but he would have been envied by all had the whole truth been known.

The four who had signed the agreement for the removal of the Aymara treasure kept their secret well, despite the curiosity aroused by the unusual amount of stores put on board the schooner, and the fact that Bart Gerry "had gone into partnership with Captain Jim."

Agreeably to his promise, old Manuel had told his new partners nearly all he knew concerning the gold they hoped to find, even confiding to them a copy of the chart of the island which he and Petro Garcia had made.

Only on certain matters between himself and this same Petro did he remain silent to all save Winn, who now shared fully in everything connected with the treasure.

"I may not live to see the island again," the old

man would repeat when the boy insisted that there was no reason why he should be given so many apparently unimportant details, "and it is necessary you know all that I am able to tell."

So often was the remark made that Winn became almost convinced his old friend would soon depart this life, and such conviction went far toward checking his joy at the prospect of going forth into the world.

No fault could have been found with Bart Gerry in the way of making provision for the voyage. He purchased ample supplies of the best quality, engaged able seamen, and in every possible manner took precautions against accidents of whatsoever nature.

It was to Winn as if these days in which the preparations were being made consisted of but half the usual number of hours, so rapidly did they pass, and when it seemed to him as if they had but just begun to make ready, the hour for departure had arrived.

There was no more jaunty craft of two hundred and fifty tons burden to be found on the Atlantic coast than the "Flying Scud" after she was trimmed according to the command of her master and owner, and nearly every man, woman and child living in Fairhaven was on the pier when the voyagers left port.

Not until the anchor was inboard and the sails rounded by the north wind into ivory spheres as the schooner rose and fell on the ocean swell, did Winn fully realize that he was to share in an adventure such as seldom falls to the lot of any boy. But, despite all this—despite the fact that he was leaving the poor-farm forever to fight the battle of life, there was a decidedly uncomfortable lump in his throat when the town slowly faded from view.

There was little fear the amateur cook might suffer from seasickness; he had made so many fishing voyages as to be well seasoned, and would probably be able to keep his feet as long as the oldest shell-back among them, therefore Manuel knew he was not suffering the usual penalty paid by the fresh-water sailor when he found the lad leaning against a corner of the galley, looking unusually grave.

"Are you homesick before we have lost sight of land?" he asked, with a smile.

"If I had a home and a father or mother, as other boys have, I might believe that is what ails me; but it doesn't seem possible that a fellow who is leaving the poor-farm can be sorry because of going."

"Fairhaven is the only place you can as yet call home, and it is not strange you should be sad at leaving it, even though your life there was not the most pleasant. I remember well the day I left Cuman on

board a craft hardly half as large as this to aid in burying the treasure. It seemed as if my heart would break."

"But you were leaving your parents."

"True, yet I believed that in less than a twelve-month I should be with them again, and to a boy of your age a year is as nothing when spent in what promises to be pleasure. Now my face is set toward the treasure again, and as then, I am empty-handed—a lifetime of hard work finds me no better off than when I first left home."

"Haven't you any money?"

"There may be a few dollars in my pockets, but not so many that very much time need be spent in counting them. What I bought as an outfit for us both, and the old dory which Captain Robinson objected to taking because of the space on deck she would occupy, makes up a list of my wealth; but yet we shall come back richer than any man in Fairhaven."

"Why did you take the dory? There are two good boats belonging to the schooner, and it doesn't seem as if we should need her."

"Most likely we won't; yet it was a whim of mine to carry the old craft, and she may be of some little service before this voyage comes to an end. But we have work to do, instead of standing here idle,

lad. The men will be looking for dinner in less than two hours, so take your last look at Fairhaven, for a couple of years at the least, and we'll see how skillful is the cook of the 'Flying Scud.' "

"It won't take long to find out that, if you call me the cook," Winn replied, with a hearty laugh which banished the faint homesickness that had assailed him, and a few moments later he was taking his first lesson in the art of preparing food on ship-board.

Had Winn been alone it is quite certain the crew of the schooner would have insisted on making an immediate change of galley captains; but, thanks to Manuel, their first meal was so satisfactory that one of the oldest among the crew was heard to say to a mate that this was the "first time he'd ever seen a kid who could make salt hoss taste like real beef."

Before night came the boy from the Fairhaven poor-farm was feeling perfectly at home in the galley of the "Flying Scud," and for the first time in his life could say with perfect truth that the future looked bright to him.

There was no thought in his mind that this adventure, which promised so much in the way of enjoyment, could be other than thoroughly pleasurable, and, fortunately for himself, there was no "shadow of coming events" to mar his present happiness.

CHAPTER III.

A STARTLING DISCLOSURE.

WINN was an apt pupil, and by the time the "Flying Scud" had made Cape Hatteras he could cook in such a manner as met with the approbation of the occupants of the forecastle.

The meals for the cabin were prepared by old Manuel himself, and when they were served the four partners partook of them in company, even though two members of the firm did not occupy such a position on ship-board as would ordinarily warrant their dining with the captain and mate.

As a matter of course the owner of the vessel acted as master, and Bart Gerry filled the berth of mate, although he was not a seaman.

It had been decided when the arrangements for the voyage were made, that, so far as possible, the command of the vessel should remain entirely among those most deeply interested in the success of the voyage; therefore it was that Bart, Manuel and Winn, although each filled a stated position on board, all turned their hands to whatsoever duty was most pressing.

The little cabin had no other occupant than the partners.

In any voyage by sea, however brief, much of interest transpires, and this cruise down to the Venezuelan coast was no exception to the general rule; but the details are of so little importance in comparison with the grand purpose of the adventure that it seems best to omit them, however entertaining they might appear when set down in words.

Therefore it is that no mention will be made of what occurred on board the "Flying Scud" from the time she left Fairhaven until anchor was dropped off the coast of Venezuela, within two marine miles of the port of Cuman.

It was in this vicinity that old Manuel hoped to find the survivors of his people, and the schooner had been brought to an anchor in accordance with his directions, which last occasioned Winn so much surprise that, at the risk of being impertinent, he asked for an explanation while the two were alone in the galley.

"Why is it that we have come to anchor here on the open coast rather than go into the port of Cuman? I expected to see all the towns and cities on our way, and yet at the first place we stop orders are given that no one is to go ashore?"

"You will visit so many strange lands, lad, before

we return, if it so be we live to return, that the little port of Cuman will have no interest for you a year or more from now, and it was necessary for my purpose that we stop here."

"But your people live in this town."

"Not so, lad. I but mentioned the port in order to describe the general location of the Aymaras. We are of a race proscribed, and have been since the dark days of '21. Those who call themselves Incas do not proclaim it aloud; it is only in the forest that we say, 'We are of the Aymaras.' "

"But why is all that necessary? Surely those who are alive to-day cannot be punished for what others did fifty-nine years ago."

"They may not be punished for that, lad; but the story of the Aymara treasure is as well known to those who rule in Venezuela to-day as to you, save so far as its whereabouts is concerned, and more than one of my race have been cruelly tortured in the hope of making them divulge a secret they did not possess. Therefore it is that we deny our own blood."

"How do you expect to find these people? It must have been a long while since you were here?"

"Since I was here? Yes. Petro, who visited me, came directly from this spot to the United

States, and from what he told I hope my search will not be in vain."

"When will you go ashore?"

"Within an hour."

"Will any of the crew be permitted to land?"

"Not if my wishes are consulted. Captain Robinson has promised that during thirty-six hours every man shall remain on board."

"And at the end of that time?"

"I shall have succeeded or failed, and in the last event there will be a new compact between us who have set out to find the Aymara treasure."

"Why may that be necessary?"

"As the compact now stands we recognize my people as the rightful owners of the hoard. If they no longer have an existence, or have been so contaminated by the blood of those who now rule this land as to cease to be true Aymaras, I shall consider that Petro Garcia and myself have the first claim upon the treasure."

The coming of Captain Jim put an end to this conversation, and half an hour later old Manuel was rowed ashore by two of the sailors.

The young cook went about his duties unaided; the captain and acting mate lounged in the cabin; the sailors spent their time on deck under impromptu awnings in idleness.

When night came old Manuel was still absent, but this occasioned his partners no surprise, for it was hardly to be supposed he could have transacted the desired business in so short a space of time, and there was no reason why any uneasiness should be felt concerning him, yet Winn was far from being comfortable in mind.

During the afternoon he observed more than once the captain and his mate in close conversation, and it seemed to him as if the latter was trying to persuade the master of the "Flying Scud" into some course of action which did not meet with the former's approval.

Even if this was true, Winn had sufficient common-sense to understand that it might not concern either himself or Manuel—that Bart Gerry might be arguing upon some subject remote from the purpose of the voyage; but yet he believed, without knowing why he did so, that this long conversation and oftentimes angry discussion had reference to the compact which was signed by those who had agreed to unearth the Aymara treasure.

Although brought up in a home for paupers, the boy had certain ideas of his own as to what might constitute honorable dealings, and eavesdropping was to his mind something to which an honest man would not stoop.

More than once before he "turned in" for the night was Winn strongly tempted to make an effort at discovering what subject Captain Jim and Bart were discussing, but he resisted such inclination, and laid himself down in his narrow bunk more disturbed in mind than he ever remembered of being before.

Mental troubles do not ordinarily banish sleep from the eyes of a fifteen-year-old boy, and the cook of the "Flying Scud" did not long remain awake after once having composed himself for slumber.

When he was aroused next morning by Captain Jim, and ordered to "bear a hand with breakfast," the forebodings of the night were almost forgotten, and he set about his duties as heartily as if nothing had occurred to disturb him.

Old Manuel, the friend whom he could trust implicitly, would soon be on board again, and if any mischief was being brewed, he was the one above all others capable of discovering it.

After breakfast had been served both in the forecastle and the cabin, it was necessary the boy should begin his preparations for dinner, and therefore he had little time for thought of anything save his regular duties until the noonday meal was at an end, when the prolonged absence of the descendant of the Incas began to cause him anxiety.

Manuel had said that if he was not successful in finding some trace of his people in thirty-six hours the voyage should not longer be delayed. There now remained but ten hours more in which the search could be prosecuted, and his delay seemed to betoken failure.

Seated on the rail aft Winn watched intently for his friend, and while he was thus engaged Captain Jim came out of the cabin and said, after looking around to make certain none of the crew were within ear-shot:

"Well, lad, it begins to look as if the old man was making a failure of his business, and I heartily hope it may be so."

"Hope he will fail?" Winn asked in surprise.

"Of course, and so ought you, for in that case we four could look upon ourselves as heirs of the Aymara treasure. It will make a big difference in our pockets whether we have a twentieth or a quarter of the whole amount."

"Do you believe Manuel would agree to our taking the whole?" Winn asked, thoroughly surprised by the captain's remark.

"As I look at the matter he won't have any choice, if we're of a mind to hold out for our rights. In case those who buried the treasure cannot be found, to whom does it belong if not to us?"

"But Manuel is certain Petro Garcia still lives, and surely the money belongs to those two rather than us, except so much as we were to receive for the finding of it."

Winn spoke all the more earnestly because it so chanced that just at the moment his mind was on the same subject.

For an instant it seemed as if Captain Jim was about to make some reply, and then with an effort he checked himself as he said laughingly:

"I don't reckon you and I could settle that matter, my boy, if we wanted to. It isn't yet certain Manuel hasn't found his people, and we can have no idea as to what will be his proposition in case he fails."

Winn fancied that the captain had not spoken all which was in his mind as the latter lounged carelessly forward, and now his forebodings of the previous night came back with redoubled force.

An hour after sunset it became necessary for the cook to go into the galley, and while there engaged old Manuel suddenly appeared in the doorway.

"How did you get here?" Winn asked in surprise. "I didn't hear the men lower the boat."

"I was brought on board by a friend."

"Then you found your people?"

"No, and yet yes."

Winn looked puzzled, and the old man added:

"Of those who have the right to call themselves Aymaras but four remain alive, saving Petro and myself. It is as if one said, 'The Aymara race no longer exists.' If Petro Garcia still lives we count ourselves as six, all old men, whose time for remaining in this world is well-nigh at an end, and my heart is sore, lad."

Manuel leaned heavily against the casing of the door, and Winn fancied he had aged many years during the thirty hours of his absence. He wished most earnestly he could say something soothing; but the words would not come at his command, and he perforce remained silent while one might have counted twenty, when Manuel said with a show of animation:

"It is better with those who have gone before than for us who remain, and I should not sorrow; but I have the feeling within me stronger than when I left Fairhaven, that I shall not see the end of this voyage, and between now and the time of my departure some plan must be decided upon whereby you will be acknowledged by our partners in this adventure as my heir."

Winn tried his best to dispel the gloomy thoughts in the old man's mind, but with no avail.

"I have consulted those of my blood, and we shall make a new compact this night regarding the Ay-

mara treasure. Do not allow me to cause you sadness, lad, for when my days draw near to a close the end will be as a relief and a pleasure."

By this time Captain Jim and Bart Gerry came forward, having learned that Manuel had returned, and there was no further opportunity for a private conversation between the old man and the boy he would make his heir, until after certain business had been settled in the cabin.

That evening the four partners assembled aft in obedience to Manuel's request, and when it had been ascertained that the crew were not where they could overhear the conversation, Telceda related the result of his search, saying in conclusion:

"I have talked with my people about that which you agree to do, and it is decided between us that I shall make this proposal in the stead of the one we drew up before leaving Fairhaven: The Aymara treasure will be divided into nine parts, one for each of you three, and the remaining six for those of our race who are yet alive. Should it be that when we return some of those whom I have seen this day are no longer living, their shares shall be divided equally among us four. Therefore it is I say to you, instead of one-twentieth part for recovering the wealth, you are to receive one-ninth, and if death has visited our number, a yet larger amount. There

can be no reason why you should object to changing the compact."

"I should say not," Bart Gerry replied glibly. "You needn't have hesitated, Manuel, about making any proposition which would increase our portion of the treasure. I'll draw up a new contract between now and this time to-morrow, so that it can be signed, and considering the length of the voyage before us, I should say there was no reason why we remain here at anchor any longer."

"The wind will probably spring up 'twixt now an' morning; but until then the schooner is bound to stay where she is," Captain Jim replied.

"There is one matter I want settled more definitely than it has been," Manuel said, heeding not the interruption to the conversation. "In event of my death, either before the treasure has been unearthed, or after, this boy, Winn Burbridge, shall be held by you to be my heir, and that share which would have come to me shall go to him in addition to his own."

"That part of it will be fixed all right," Bart replied carelessly. "You have repeated the same thing half a dozen times since we started, Manuel, and it is well understood."

"But I want it written down, and your signatures attached, in as nearly a legal manner as may be, so

that should either of you attempt to break the promises made, you can be forced by law to live up to the agreement."

"I'll fix it all right; don't you worry, old man," Bart replied with a laugh.

"I shall not worry, for I intend the business be done properly, and will see that it is in due form."

"So you shall, and considering that we may be obliged to get under way before sunrise, I should say the wisest thing for all hands was to turn in. I for one count on getting a little sleep before we begin the voyage which is likely to run well into a year."

Manuel went on deck at once, and when Winn followed him, said to the boy:

"You are to go to sleep, lad, for slumber comes readily to the eyes of the young, and is needed. It is well I should be alone with the memories which will not be banished, and by to-morrow I shall have forced them down, when you can no longer have reason to complain because I seem to shun companionship."

Winn understood that it was not well to make any reply, and turning quickly on his heel went to the berth assigned him in the cabin, fully intending to get so much of a night's rest as might be possible before the "Flying Scud" was gotten under way.

It appeared to the boy as if he was more entirely alone than ever, because the one person whom he claimed as friend denied him the privilege of sharing his sorrow, and perhaps it was this which served to keep slumber from his eyelids. Instead of immediately crossing over into dreamland after having retired, he tossed and tumbled about in the narrow bunk until so thoroughly wide awake that it seemed impossible slumber would ever come to his relief, and thinking half an hour spent in pacing the deck might give him the desired heaviness of eyelids, he stole softly out, closing his cabin door quietly lest he disturb the repose of the captain and the mate.

His room was at the further end of the small saloon, and to gain the companion-way it was necessary that he pass near the door of the captain's cabin.

When he crept silently aft there was no thought in his mind of anything save to avoid disturbing those who might be sleeping, but that which was heard as he passed Captain Jim's room caused him to come to a sudden halt, and for the time being he did not realize he was playing the eavesdropper, so great was the fear which came upon him.

"I tell you, Jim, there's no reason why we should let this old Spaniard or Indian, or whichever he may be, dictate to us as if we were children," he heard Bart say in an angry tone. "I'm ready to draw up

and sign any kind of an agreement he wants; but as for keeping it, that's another matter."

It was as if Winn's heart stood still for an instant, and like a flash came to him the thought that this was but a continuation of the discussion which had aroused his forebodings while old Manuel was ashore.

He was literally incapable of movement; but stood in front of the door in an attentive attitude, even while unconscious that he was listening, and thus heard Captain Jim's reply:

"A square man would live up to his promise, an' I allow that the agreement we made with old Manuel the first night in Fairhaven is binding upon us."

"Now, look here, Jim, don't make a fool of yourself when it's likely to cost so much money. Allowing the Aymara treasure to be where Manuel says it is; allowing that we find it without difficulty, an' get it aboard this craft, are you such an idiot as to take one-ninth when we can have the whole?"

"I never have done that which any man could say was crooked."

"You never had a chance such as this. Your honest dealings have been matters of a few dollars, and this means millions, Jim. The treasure must be ours, and as for the pauper kid an' old Manuel, it

wouldn't be any hard job to leave them on Cocos Island."

"For the sake of millions you would commit murder?"

"To maroon a couple like them can't be called murder, however much you may stretch it, for if what Manuel says regarding the island be true, it's their own fault if they don't live as long as the Lord allows. I tell you, Jim, if the treasure ever comes on board the 'Flying Scud' it must be divided according to our notions, if it is divided at all. I don't say I wouldn't give up a few thousand dollars, but as for throwing away eight-ninths, it's out of the question, and that I hold to, whether you are with me or not."

Winn heard a slight noise as if the speaker, having thus announced his intentions, had risen, and dimly understanding it was absolutely necessary for the safety of himself and Manuel that it should not be suspected he had overheard the conversation, he crept swiftly and noiselessly up the companion-way stairs, running forward in a fever of excitement, trembling violently.

Halting near the forecastle-hatch, he looked around after old Manuel, the one thought in his mind being that his friend must know at the earliest possible moment of Bart Gerry's avowed treachery.

No one could be seen save the man on watch, who was leaning over the starboard rail as if half asleep.

As Winn glanced aft he saw a form emerge from the cabin, and believed the mate of the "Flying Scud" had come on deck.

"Where is Manuel?"

He asked the question of the silent figure at the rail, and received for reply:

"Hob-nobbing out there in what the Injuns 'round this 'ere country call a bungo," the man replied, pointing in the gloom toward a dark smudge on the water so far away that it could hardly be distinguished.

"Did some one come for him?"

"Yes, that 'ere craft has got four guys on board of her, an' you might say any one of 'em was Manuel himself without knowing the difference. They're as like as peas in a pod. Accordin' to my way of thinkin' he was expectin' 'em, for when the craft come alongside he dropped over the rail, and there wasn't so much as a yip from the crowd. If it wasn't that we knowed the old man was all right, I'd say there was some mischief brewin', but of course there's no chance of that."

"Of course not," Winn replied indignantly. "Everybody in Fairhaven knows Manuel Telceda to be an honest man, an' that's more than——"

Winn checked himself, and it was high time, for in another moment the thoughts which were in his mind would have been shaped into words.

Then came a hail from Bart Gerry.

"Who's that forward?"

"Nobody but Joe Savage and the cook," the sailor replied.

"I thought you turned in hours ago, Winn?" and Gerry came forward.

"I went below, but couldn't sleep, and so came on deck," the boy said hesitatingly.

"How long ago?"

"Can't say, sir; but it seems as though I hadn't been in my room but a little while."

"Where's Manuel?"

Winn repeated what the sailor had told him, and turning on his heel the mate of the "Flying Scud" went aft again, much to the relief of the boy from the Fairhaven poor-farm.

CHAPTER IV.

MANUEL'S DEATH.

WINN remained on deck an hour longer, and at the end of that time neither had Manuel returned, nor the wind freshened sufficiently to admit of the "Flying Scud's" departure.

Excited though he was by the knowledge of what Bart Gerry was willing to do, his eyes were heavy with slumber, and there seemed no good reason why he should not indulge in the desire for sleep.

Many months must necessarily elapse before the schooner could arrive at the island where the Aymara treasure had been hidden, and it seemed at the moment to be of but little importance whether the old man was made acquainted with the proposed treachery of the mate then or a week later.

"A new agreement can't be drawn till to-morrow, and I'll have a chance to speak with Manuel the first thing in the morning," he said to himself as he went below.

No sound could be heard as he made his way through the cabin, save the heavy breathing of the

captain and mate, and he understood that Bart's plottings were at an end, for this night at least.

His eyes closed almost immediately after he was stretched at full length in his bunk, and he was conscious of nothing more until the violent lurching of the schooner threw him against the bulkhead.

This decidedly rude awakening was sufficient evidence that the "Flying Scud" was at last under way on a voyage which, barring accidents, would not come to an end until she had ploughed through the world of waters that lay between the Caribbean Sea and the Indian Ocean.

It was daylight and high time the cook should be in the galley.

Thanks to his experience as a fisherman, Winn found his sea-legs very speedily, even though the schooner was making decidedly heavy weather of it, and, contrary to his expectations, he did not meet Manuel in the galley.

Every morning since they left Fairhaven the old man had been first at Winn's post of duty; but there seemed to be good and sufficient reason for his absence at this time.

"He was up all night with his people, most likely, for I don't reckon he came on board till just before we got under way," the boy said to himself as he set about the work of the day, and not until the crew

had been served with breakfast did he realize that there was something odd, to say the least, in old Manuel's tardiness.

Then a sudden fear seized upon him. Remembering the threatening words he had heard from the captain's cabin, the thought flashed into his mind that possibly Bart Gerry had been more than willing to leave the old man behind in order to possess himself of all the treasure.

That the acting mate of the "Flying Scud" would commit a deadly crime in order to enrich himself, Winn did not really believe, even though he had good reason for knowing the man to be unscrupulous to the last degree.

Before doing more toward preparing the breakfast to be served in the cabin than the making of coffee, Winn went to old Manuel's cabin, knocked gently at the door, and experienced the deepest sense of relief when he heard the summons to enter.

An instant later that relief was changed to alarm, for a single glance at the old man's face as he lay in the bunk told of sudden and severe illness.

"Are you sick?" Winn cried nervously, and the reply was not reassuring.

"I fear that that which I anticipated has come even sooner than I thought probable."

"What do you mean?" And kneeling by the side

of the bunk that he might the better steady himself against the violent motions of the schooner, Winn clasped the old man's hands.

"I am sick, lad, sick unto death, and it is well the details of the business should be settled with the captain and mate at once."

"But surely you cannot be in any danger of death so suddenly. What happened before you came on board? Joe Savage told me your friends put out from the shore in some kind of a craft and showed me what he said was the boat."

"Yes, I saw them again after speaking with you, and perhaps the meeting with them, the knowledge that I am almost the last of my race, and the parting, adds to the illness which has overtaken me. I am an old man, lad, older in body than in years. All those whom I have loved have long since gone before, and with this business brought to a proper ending, I can but rejoice that the time has come for me to join my friends. Robinson and Gerry must give you such a writing as will prove your claim to a certain portion of the treasure, and then I may go out of the world knowing that by having lived in it I have made at least one person happier."

As the old man spoke he seemed to grow brighter, and Winn, eager to catch at any ray of hope however small, began to fancy Manuel had exaggerated

his illness—that all which he had passed through since the schooner came to anchor off the Venezuelan coast had so worked upon his mind that he fancied death to be near at hand, while it was yet far in the future.

Therefore it was he refrained from telling that which he had heard Bart Gerry say to the captain.

Surely at such a time it would not be well to disturb old Manuel's mind more than it had already been, and no real good could result from repeating the threats.

"Call Captain Robinson, lad. Even though I be not as ill as now seems positive, it is well we have the business matters settled—well for me and necessary for your interest."

Winn obeyed at once by going on deck, where he knew Captain Jim to be, and there said hurriedly:

"Manuel is sick, sir—believes himself to be dying, and insists that the agreement in regard to the Aymara treasure shall be made at once."

"Sick, eh?" And Captain Jim looked so thoroughly disturbed that Winn felt positive he had not agreed to the base proposal of the unscrupulous mate.

"He is lying in his bunk, sir, an' can't seem to get up."

"I'll come down at once, and in the meantime, if it

will do the old man any good to have the writings made, tell Mr. Gerry that he is wanted."

Winn went to the mate's room and there repeated what he had said to the captain, adding to it the message he had been instructed to deliver.

"I don't reckon he's very sick," the mate grumbled, impatient because his slumbers were thus disturbed. "He's a reg'lar old maid, an' likely to believe himself dyin' when another man would be hustlin' 'round at work. Out too late last night, an' serves him right if he's got cramps this morning."

"The captain told me to say that you were to write the agreement at once."

"It's a waste of time, an' can't do the old fellow any good; but if Captain Jim insists on it, I s'pose we may as well go through the form. What is it he wants?"

"Will you go an' ask him, sir?"

"No; find out what he wants me to write, an' I'll do it. There's no reason why I should be disturbed while it's my watch below."

Winn returned to Manuel's room, almost fearing lest he should find the old man unable to speak; but to his great relief there had been no apparent change, and again hope sprang up in his heart. Perhaps Bart Gerry was right; perhaps this supposedly serious sickness was but a slight indisposition which

would speedily wear away, and there was a cheery ring in the boy's tone as he said:

"The captain will come right down to see you, an' the mate is goin' to make out the agreement after you tell me what he shall write. I'll bring a cup of coffee, an' perhaps you will feel better after drinkin' it."

"You may do so if you choose, lad; but first go to Gerry and tell him to set down that which I said yesterday, stating also in the same document that you are to be considered by him and the captain as my heir, and both of them are to agree—solemnly agree—to protect your rights in event of my death before the voyage is ended."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, lad, all until this business has been settled, and then you are to come to me when we can be alone."

"Of course I shall stay with you every moment I can."

"It is not necessary you should remain here while needed in the galley, lad; but I must speak with you after the writings have been signed, because through you alone I trust that their portion of the Aymara treasure will be delivered to those of my people who yet remain alive. Go now, my boy, for there must be no delay."

The command was obeyed, and on passing through the saloon it could be seen that the mate had already begun work on the document Manuel believed to be so important, but which Winn felt positive would be of no avail if it should be possible for Bart Gerry to break it.

"You had better serve breakfast here as soon as you can," the mate said when the cook entered the saloon. "It will take me a couple of hours to write out all the old fool seems to think is necessary should be set down, therefore the signin' of this very precious document won't take place till near noon, an' in the meantime the work on board must be done just the same as if he had not gotten this ridiculous fancy into his head."

Before obeying this command Winn made a cup of coffee for the sick man and carried it below.

To his great satisfaction Manuel drank it almost eagerly, and the boy asked if the captain had paid the promised visit.

"He came just after you left, lad, and seemed very kind. If Gerry was the same sort of man I should have less fear as to what might be done after I have gone. Be on your guard against the mate, who will defraud you, as well as my people, if he can. Although I shall not be there when you land on Cocos Island, I hope that by following my in-

structions you may be able to hold him to his written word. When the document has been signed, you are to take possession of it, and be certain, lad, that you do not let it out of your keeping. Unless Petro has been to Cocos within the past two years, the Aymara treasure will be found as we left it. If it is taken on board this vessel, and the amount set down in the agreement is delivered to my people and yourself, all will be well. In case Gerry should break his solemn word and attempt to deprive you and the descendants of the Incas of your lawful rights, seek out Petro Garcia. He knows that you are the only person in Fairhaven whom I looked upon as a friend, and will believe all you say."

"But if Gerry should succeed in takin' possession of all the gold, an' I do not see how I could prevent him if he was so disposed, what might this Petro do to oppose it?"

"Although my people are few in numbers, yet are they strong after a certain fashion which you may not understand now, and should this man Gerry prove false to the word which he is to pledge in the presence of a dying man, his punishment will be as certain as it will be great."

Never before had Winn heard the old man speak in such a tone, and he was awed, although it would have been difficult for him to explain exactly why.

DRAW THE SHORTEST LINE TO NEAREST PALM.
DRAW LONGEST LINE TO TALLEST PALM.
THE POINT WILL MARK THE SPOT.
GOOD HARBOR
531 YARDS.
5 PALM TREES.
619 YARDS TO TALLEST POINT OF
ROCKY SHORES
SKULL
N
E
S
W
MOUTH OF CAVE
EAST TUNNEL

Manuel took from beneath the mattress of the bunk a folded document.

"Here is the chart which Petro and I made," Manuel continued, speaking in his usual manner. "It was a copy of this which I gave Captain Robinson. If Petro should doubt that you have full power to represent me in the matter of the Aymara treasure after my death, the paper will convince him of the truth of your statement."

Gerry's voice from the cabin summoned Winn, and as he answered the call the mate said impatiently:

"There's no reason why you should fool away your time when there's work to be done. Get the cabin breakfast ready in short order, or you'll have trouble with me."

The threatening tone surprised the boy, for until this moment Bart Gerry had treated him as an equal —almost a friend, and as he went hurriedly toward the galley in obedience to the command he began to realize what would probably be his position on board the "Flying Scud" if Manuel should be summoned to his fathers.

Half an hour later breakfast was served, but the cook had no desire to partake of the meal.

Instead of remaining at the table he went into Manuel's room, and there stayed, although it was not

possible for him to be of any assistance to the sick man, until the captain and mate entered with the document in question.

"I don't allow there's any reason why this thing had to be made up to-day," Gerry said in a tone of irritation; "but here it is, an' Captain Jim an' myself have both written our names at the bottom, so I take it for granted the business is settled."

"Read it to me," and Manuel raised himself on his elbow.

"You've got lots of time to do that for yourself. What's the sense of my bothering?"

"Because both the boy and I must hear from your own mouth that which you promised."

Gerry would have refused; in fact, he turned as if to leave the cabin, but Captain Jim stopped him by saying:

"It's no more than right, Bart, you should do as he asks. The bargain is a fair one between us four, and if all old Manuel has told us be true, we shall be made rich through him. Read your paper like a man."

Those who knew Captain Jim Robinson as did Bart, understood when he spoke in such a tone that he would be obeyed, and, although the mate was under his command only in name, he did not deem it advisable to refuse.

With a decided show of ill-temper he stood near the bull's-eye as if the light was too dim to admit of his deciphering the written words readily, and old Manuel said sharply:

"Look over his shoulder, lad, as he reads. I want to make certain every word which he utters is set down on the paper."

"You must think I'm a chump if I'd attempt to read a word that isn't down here!" Bart cried, and giving no heed to the mate's angry reply, Winn did as he was directed.

Then Bartholomew Gerry read with unnecessary emphasis the following:

"We, the undersigned, hereby covenant and agree with Manuel Telceda, late of Fairhaven, in the State of New Jersey and the United States of America, that we will fit out with all necessary stores, provide with a competent crew, and navigate to the Island of Cocos, in latitude 12° 5′ S., longitude 90° 55′ E., the schooner 'Flying Scud,' and there dig in the earth, according to his instructions and with due reference to the chart which he has this day given us, for the purpose of unearthing the so-called Aymara treasure.

"We further agree and solemnly bind ourselves that, in event of our discovering said treasure on the said island of Cocos, we will deliver to him or his

heirs one-ninth of all the treasure so unearthed by us, and to Winslow Burbridge we will deliver one-ninth of the said treasure, and to Petro Garcia we will deliver one-ninth of the said treasure, and to each of four other persons whom Petro Garcia shall designate we will deliver one-ninth.

"And it is also mutually agreed and understood that we, the undersigned, shall hold for ourselves, to repay us for the money which we have expended and for the use of the said schooner 'Flying Scud,' two-ninths of the said treasure, if found in accordance with the information given us by the said Manuel Telceda.

"In order that this agreement may be more plain, it is here repeated that if we, the undersigned, find the said treasure in accordance with the information given by the said Manuel Telceda, it shall be equally and fairly divided into nine portions, two portions of which we retain for our own purposes and the remaining seven portions to be delivered as hereinbefore stated.

"Signed on board the schooner 'Flying Scud' this seventh day of June, 1880.

"JAMES ROBINSON,
"BARTHOLOMEW GERRY."

"Is that what you want?" the mate asked petulantly as he ceased reading.

"So far as it goes, yes," Manuel replied. "You have not set down that, in event of my death, the portion which should come to me shall be given to the boy, and that he be considered my heir, you protecting him so far as may be in your power in the holding of whatever money or property would be mine were I alive."

"Well, now you're getting a little beyond me. I reckon you'd better repeat what you want, an' I'll write it down an' sign it over again. Anything to please you, an' while you're about it, you ought to name the others to whom the four portions are to be given, else how shall we find 'em? We can anchor off the coast of Venezuela an' pick up a lot of natives who don't dare show themselves in daylight."

"I have written down for the boy the names of my people, with full directions how to find them after I am dead; therefore you need give yourself no uneasiness on that score. Now write."

It was necessary the mate should first bring into the cabin pens and ink. After this was done he sat down and at old Manuel's dictation wrote the following addendum to the agreement:

"We, James Robinson and Bartholomew Gerry, of Fairhaven, in the State of New Jersey and United States of America, do hereby solemnly bind our-

selves to protect in every possible way the boy, Winn Burbridge, now acting as cook on board the schooner 'Flying Scud,' both in his own rights and as the heir of Manuel Telceda, late of Fairhaven, in the said State of New Jersey, and we also solemnly bind ourselves to obey his instructions in the disposal of the Aymara treasure as we would obey the instructions of the said Manuel Telceda were he alive."

"Now both of you sign that and the business will have been finished," the old man said as he sank back on the pillow with a sigh of relief.

Gerry wrote his name hurriedly, and passing the pen to the captain, went out of the cabin, muttering as he did so:

"If we are to take part in such flummery as this every time the old man has an attack of indigestion we may as well give up trying to attend to the schooner and devote our time to him."

Captain Jim signed his name more deliberately and then handed the document to Winn.

"Perhaps you'd better take care of it, lad, until the old man's feelin' better. I don't reckon he's anywhere near his death, an' hope most sincerely he isn't. Make some kind of broth for him, an' he'll be more chipper by noon."

Then he in turn went out, and Manuel drew from

beneath the bed coverings several pages of paper closely covered with writing.

"Take these, my boy, an' put them with the paper the captain and the mate have signed. After I am dead you can read it. Perhaps it would be well to make me some broth."

Winn put the document in his pocket carelessly and would have left the room at once but that the old man said:

"Look well to those papers, lad, and before doing anything else, see that they are put where it will be impossible for Bart Gerry to find them."

"I reckon I know of a place in the galley where he won't be likely to stick his nose," Winn replied, cheerily, and immediately went on deck to prepare the broth as had been suggested.

Half an hour later he returned, bearing a bowl of steaming liquid, which he hoped would prove palatable to the sick man; but it dropped from his hands as he entered the cabin, while a cry of pain and sorrow escaped his lips.

Manuel Telceda had embarked on his last journey, across the dark river on the other side of which awaited his fathers, and to them he could say that he had, while on this earth, done his best to restore to its rightful owners the treasure of the Aymaras.

"Look well to those papers, lad," said Manuel, "and see that they are put where Bart Gerry can't find them."—Page 70.

The Treasure of Cocos Island.

CHAPTER V.

THE MATE'S TYRANNY.

WINN was hardly conscious of what occurred during several days following Manuel Telceda's death.

He had never before been brought into close contact with death, and that his only friend should have been stricken down filled him with a horror from which he could not escape, try as he might.

During twenty-four hours even Bart Gerry was subdued. He went about his duties quietly, ceased to bully the men and shunned the cabin.

Some one of the crew, Winn never knew who, took his place in the galley until after that most impressive of all services—a burial at sea—and when the body had been consigned to the deep the boy secluded himself in his own room, as if he no longer had any purpose in life.

Once, while his grief was keenest, Bart opened the cabin door and asked sharply "if he counted on shirking his work"; but before Winn had time to reply Captain Jim cried from the companion-way:

"Leave the boy alone, Bart! I reckon we can get on without him for a spell yet, an' it is only natural he should want to be by himself."

One or another of the sailors brought food to the grief-stricken lad, and finally the captain visited him, saying in a kindly tone as he shook Winn with a certain rough tenderness:

"See here, lad, this moping is doing you more harm than good. I allow the sudden death was enough to give you a bad turn, as it did all of us; but such things must happen sooner or later, and those left behind are bound, for their own sakes, to brace up. Get on deck now an' go to work. It's time you looked after the cookin', for we've been on mighty short rations since all hands have had a turn at it."

Then Captain Jim led the boy to the companion-way, and as the latter ascended the stairs Bart Gerry met him.

"So you condescended to show yourself, eh? If you'd stayed below much longer I'd had you out, no matter what Jim Robinson might say. Now get into the galley, and if there's any sojerin' after this you'll have an account to settle with me."

Perhaps Winn needed something of this kind to arouse him to a sense of his duty, for certain it is that the mate's brutal threats did more toward enabling the boy to "pull himself together" than had the captain's kindly words.

There certainly was plenty of work for the captain of the galley,

The cook's quarters were in a fine state of confusion, as might have been expected when one sailor after another had "taken his trick" at preparing the food. The cooking utensils had been thrown in the most convenient places, without regard to cleanliness or order, and more than a single day would be necessary in order to set the galley to rights.

At first it seemed impossible that Winn could even so much as remain in a place where everything reminded him of the man who had gone; but he forced himself to the work, and from that time forth during the long voyage both the occupants of the cabin and of the forecastle were served with due regularity.

During a week or ten days after Manuel's death Bart Gerry contented himself with strictly demanding such work as would have fallen to the lot of a professional cook, but when such time had expired it seemed as if his one delight was in trying to overtask both the strength and the temper of old Manuel's heir.

For a while he was careful not to bully the lad when Captain Jim could overhear him, but as time wore on it apparently made no difference whether the master of the "Flying Scud" approved or disapproved of his methods.

There was hardly an hour in the day when he did not come to the galley to threaten the direst punish-

ment if the meal in hand was not served promptly or the food not prepared in a more appetizing manner.

That he had no right, in his position as mate of the vessel, to so bully and abuse, Winn understood perfectly well, and therefore the boy could assign but one reason for such brutal behavior.

This was partially guessed by Joe Savage, who said one morning as he was lounging near the galley:

"I can't make out, lad, why the mate bears down on you so hard. It is agin all rhyme and reason for the first officer of a craft to meddle with the cook, unless there's serious cause for complaint. Me an' my mates are allowin' that he's tryin' to drive you into what he can call mutiny, though why he should want to do that is more than I'm able to figger."

"So long as he uses no more than his tongue, I suppose I can stand it," Winn replied, his face flushing as he remembered the words of abuse which had that very morning been heaped upon him; "but if he should attempt to beat me, as he has threatened, I'm afraid I couldn't keep my temper."

"It would never do to raise your hand agin him, lad. No matter how much a sailor is cuffed an' kicked 'round, jest as soon as he shows he's got the spirit of a man he's set down for a mutinous villain, an' any judge on shore would send him to jail for so

much as raisin' a hand. Did you ever have any trouble with Gerry before you shipped?"

"Although we both belonged in Fairhaven, I hardly knew him. He is a man who never had much to say to the boys, and took no notice of me who lived at the poor-farm."

"Then why does he jump down on you so hard?" Joe asked, as if to himself. "I can't see but that you're doin' your duty as well as any cook I ever saw, except it may be in the matter of plum-duff, an' there you're a little off, as might be expected. Me an' my mates have made up our minds that he's tryin' to drive you into what he'll call mutiny, though why we can't say."

Several times since Manuel's death had Winn believed he could answer such a question. Now that he owned, in accordance with the agreement signed by the captain and the mate, two full shares of the treasure if it should be found, it was quite reasonable to suppose Gerry hoped to goad him into some overt act, whereby he could be set ashore at the most convenient port, charged with mutinous conduct.

By so doing the treasure-seekers would rid themselves of a partner who could be of little real service in the venture, and no one left to raise his voice against any disposal of the wealth which might be made.

But, even after having made this explanation to himself, Winn was not satisfied with it, for he knew full well that such a man as Gerry would pay no heed to anything he might say, and if it was in his mind to hold all the treasure in case it was discovered, the boy's presence on the scene would not deter him.

As a matter of course neither Joe Savage nor his mates could argue the case from such a standpoint, because as yet the crew were wholly ignorant as to the purpose of the voyage. They had been told that the "Flying Scud" was bound for certain islands in the Indian Ocean on a trading venture, and this seemed reasonable in view of the large amount of goods which had been put on board.

Barrels of flour, biscuit, and cases of canned meats were inscribed with the names of various goods such as would be used on a trading-voyage, solely with the purpose of deceiving the gossips of Fairhaven, who would have wondered greatly had they supposed the entire cargo of the schooner was composed of stores for the crew.

Therefore, as has been stated, the sailors believed they had shipped simply for an ordinary venture, and if such was the case they could form no idea as to why the mate should wish to be rid of a cook who thus far had given almost perfect satisfaction.

Since the death of old Manuel, Winn had reflected

long and deeply upon his position on board the "Flying Scud," and had said to himself again and again that he would not allow himself to show signs of insubordination, save, perhaps, in case of absolute and excessive cruelty.

He firmly believed in the existence of the Aymara treasure as described by the descendant of the Incas, and held it as a solemn duty he owed to the dead man to retain his place among the partners in the venture, that Manuel's people might receive a due share of the money hidden by their ancestors.

On this day when Joe Savage spoke to Winn in regard to the mate's treatment, Gerry had been more than usually abusive, and after dinner was brought into the cabin pretended that the meat was not cooked properly.

Using this as a pretext, he berated the cook in vilest language, and concluded by striking Winn such a blow full in the face as sent him headlong to the deck.

"Don't you do that again!" Winn cried as he leaped nimbly to his feet, taking good care to retreat to a safe distance, prepared to defend himself. "You know why I shipped, and you've got no right to treat me as you have been doing since Manuel died. I don't count on letting you drive me into what sailors call mutiny, as I believe you are trying to do, but

shall stand up for my rights as I would if I'd been really hired as cook on board this schooner."

"How dare you make talk to me?" And the mate advanced upon the boy in a fury.

"I haven't done so before, Bart Gerry; but we are alone now, and it is time we came to an understanding," Winn replied as he assumed a position of defense. "Since Manuel Telceda died you've abused me without cause every time you came near the galley, and have even walked from the wheel to do so when you have had nothing better on hand. If you keep on at this rate, instead of raising a mutiny I'll tell the crew the whole story, show the agreement signed by you and Captain Jim, and ask that they help me get fair treatment."

"You mutinous scoundrel, I'll break every bone in your body!"

"You'll answer for it to the law, if you do. I don't question but that you are willing to commit murder for the sake of getting rid of me; but in the meanwhile I am going to take precious good care of myself. So far, the work in the galley has been done as well as any ordinary cook could do it, and you have had no reason to find fault with me. Already the men are beginning to ask themselves why it is you bear down on me so hard, and I've got enough in my possession to prove the reason.

"You mutinous scoundrel," said the mate to Winn, "I'll break every bone in your body."—Page 78. *The Treasure of Cocos Island.*

What's more, I intend to produce it, when it seems necessary, in order to save my life."

Gerry had advanced a few paces, with hand upraised, when the boy began to speak; but before Winn concluded he stood motionless before the lad as the true position of affairs began to dawn upon him.

This boy from the Fairhaven poor-house intended to do battle in his own defense, and an appeal to the crew might, and very likely would, result in a failure of the venture.

Gerry had sufficient common sense to understand that if the men, who had been shipped simply for a trading voyage, agreed to continue on what many would unquestionably believe a wild-goose chase, they might demand a certain share of the hoard if it was found, and thus he and the captain be forced to receive a smaller share than Manuel Telceda had agreed upon.

For the time being Winn was the victor, and, understanding this, the boy had sufficient good sense to go about his work at once, for additional words at such a time would not only be useless, but might weaken the effect of what he had already said.

When his labors in the galley were concluded, however, he set about making ready for that which he had threatened, by taking the agreement and old

Manuel's last instructions from their hiding-place and fastening them around his body underneath his clothing, from whence they could be produced at any moment it might be necessary, while at the same time they would be concealed from view. Then he went into his cabin with no other idea than that of being alone for a short time, in order to calmly consider the situation of affairs.

Gerry was in his own room when Winn went below, and, consequently, had no knowledge as to the whereabouts of the cook.

Therefore it was that when the mate came out into the saloon, meeting there Captain Jim who had left the deck for a few moments, he naturally supposed they were the only occupants of that portion of the schooner.

Hence he did not lower his voice while repeating to the captain the scene between himself and Winn, and the latter could not avoid overhearing the conversation.

"The cub is beginning to understand what I'm about, an' may be dangerous if we don't take steps to choke him off," Bart said as he concluded the story. "Once let the crew know the purpose of this voyage, and we are undone, so far as getting the biggest part of that treasure is concerned."

"Why don't you treat him decently an' live up to

our agreement? There's plenty of money in it for us as old Telceda arranged the matter—more than you and I could spend during the remainder of our lives. He's a partner, an' but for him we might not have been in the scheme. Therefore I say we should act honestly by the boy."

"And I say you are a fool, Jim Robinson, if you are willing to give up millions for the sake of currying favor with a pauper."

"I am not currying favor, Bart Gerry; but simply treating the boy as I would like to be treated."

"It's too late for all that namby-pamby talk. You agreed with me that if Telceda died we should get rid of the cub, providin' I would do the dirty work."

"Yes, I agreed, Bart Gerry, because you had me foul by threatening to turn back if I didn't fall in with your views. The stores are yours, and failing in them we couldn't continue the voyage; but the schooner is mine, and without her you can't step foot on Cocos Island."

"That's where you're makin' a big mistake, an' don't you forget it! There are plenty of schooners in this world, or brigs, or ships, for that matter, which can be chartered, and you know it as well as I do. Land me and my stores at the nearest port, if you are so honest that you are willing to give away two or three million dollars, and before you have

gotten back to Fairhaven I'll be on board another craft bound for Cocos Island, with the right to take every piece of gold in that hoard for my own. It'll be a good trade for me, too, and I don't care how soon you turn rusty."

"It might be possible I could find others who would invest a few dollars in the venture, if I showed them a chart of the island."

"Have you got it?"

"Old Manuel gave it to us both."

"So he did; but it is in my possession, and while you are hunting for another partner I'll be unearthing the treasure. Now you can have your choice, Jim Robinson; run this venture to suit me, or back down, I don't care which."

"When it comes to talk like that I'm beaten, of course, and am just so much of a cur that rather than give up my chance of what may be on Cocos Island, I'll stand by and see you try to drive an innocent, honest lad into defending himself, until you can lawfully put him under arrest at the nearest port."

"It matters little to me what you call yourself, so that you do as I say. There is this, however, for you to consider and figure as to what measures can be taken toward preventing it. In the first place, the boy is to be sent ashore charged with mutiny, and there must be such evidence as will convict him

by the testimony of the crew themselves. That is decided upon. Now, he threatens to make the men acquainted with the facts of the case, and if he does that, we can say good-by to the Aymara treasure."

"This devil's broth is of your own brewing, and you shall finish it without any of my help."

"I don't think I shall. To protect even the ninth portion which Telceda agreed should be yours, you've got to do what you can to prevent this boy from carrying out his threats, so try to think of some plan between now and morning. During that length of time, at least, I'll guarantee he don't make mischief for us aboard this schooner."

"Look here, Bart, just stop for a minute and think how much easier and more satisfactory it would be in every way if, instead of trying to get a few more dollars for ourselves, we played fair with Winn. There is no reason why everything shouldn't move along smoothly; nothing to prevent our going ahead as we agreed upon before leaving Fairhaven, providing we'll do what we've promised over our signatures."

"There's the biggest kind of a reason why it can't be done, for I won't have it. You are in a position where you're bound to help me through, unless we put into the nearest port, break partnership between us, and you give up all hope of the treasure."

As may be supposed, Winn had listened intently during this conversation, which was carried on in such loud tones that he could distinctly hear every word spoken.

From the silence which followed he understood that Captain Jim had no reply to make to this last remark, and after a brief pause he heard the mate walk out of the saloon.

The banging of the captain's door told that he had gone into his own room, and the cook knew it was absolutely necessary for his own safety that he should gain the galley without Bart Gerry's suspecting he might have been where he could play the part of eavesdropper.

This was not a simple matter, for it was necessary he should ascend the after companion-way stairs in order to gain the deck.

It was better to start at once than wait until Captain Robinson had followed the mate, and by a rare good fortune Gerry was forward inspecting some work on the forecastle-deck.

Joe Savage stood at the wheel, and to him Winn whispered:

"Don't let on that I've been down here, Joe."

"I reckon you heard what the captain and mate
talkin' about, eh?"

id you?" Winn asked in surprise.

"I couldn't very well help it unless I'd been stone deaf. Say, lad, what kind of a voyage is this 'ere we've shipped for?"

"I can't stop to speak with you now, Joe, or the mate will see me and know where I've been. Don't say anything to the others about what you've heard, and if we get a chance this evening I'll tell you something."

"It's high time you did, lad, for you're needin' a friend on this 'ere schooner mighty bad, accordin' to my way of thinkin'. An older head than yours, or perhaps mine, is needed to get you out of the snarl you've dropped into, an' I ain't certain but that all hands of us are in an uncomfortable kind of a fix."

"Keep quiet about what you've heard until you see me again," Winn whispered, and then, the mate's back being turned for an instant, he ran swiftly forward to the galley.

CHAPTER VI.

AN ALLIANCE.

ALTHOUGH Winn had spoken stoutly to the mate, he was far from feeling as brave as his words implied.

Once alone in the galley, he had ample time for reflection, if it had been needed. It was not necessary he should study the situation very intently before realizing the dangers which beset him.

Now that Bart Gerry was determined to rid himself of the young partner, there were many ways by which the matter could be accomplished and against which Winn could make but feeble resistance. Even though it should so chance that the mate failed to arouse his victim to such a pitch that the show of mutiny would be made—if Winn could keep his temper down while suffering most cruel and abusive treatment, it would not be difficult for Bart Gerry to quietly dispose of the boy without exciting suspicion.

It would be a comparatively simple matter to push the lad overboard on some dark night while he was

making his way from the galley to the cabin, without being seen by the man at the wheel or the crew who kept watch forward, and this fact Winn did not fully realize until he was alone in the galley.

Then the thought came suddenly, causing the liveliest fears.

"Bart Gerry would kill me for the sake of getting my share of the treasure as readily as he would a kitten, and I have made a big mistake in threatening to tell the crew," Winn said to himself as this phase of the case presented itself. "Both he and the captain are bound to have their eyes on me from now out, and my situation is ten times worse than it was an hour ago."

Words seem poor and cold in describing Winn's position on board the "Flying Scud" after he had openly defied Bart Gerry.

There was little question in the boy's mind but that the mate would commit murder without compunction, if there was no other means by which the desired end could be obtained, and it was almost absolutely certain he would do so rather than allow the crew to be made acquainted with the purpose of the voyage.

Winn knew all too well that Captain Jim believed himself powerless to oppose the mate's plans, therefore Manuel Telceda's heir stood alone, facing a

deadly enemy, unless it should be possible to enlist the sympathies of one or more of the crew.

Joe Savage had been exceedingly friendly since the day the "Flying Scud" left the home port, and, having overheard the conversation between the mate and the captain, had such an inkling of the situation that he would readily believe the boy's story.

"I must tell him just how I'm fixed, and whatever he advises I'll do, even if he should propose that I desert the schooner at the first opportunity," the boy said to himself, and an instant later he realized that it might not be possible to hold a private conversation with the sailor, after having been so rash as to warn the mate of his intention.

"I'll do my best between now an' night," he thought. "By speaking a few words each time Joe passes the galley I should be able to give him a good idea of affairs without seeming to be telling any secrets."

He was interrupted in these painful musings as Gerry, coming from the forecastle-deck, halted at the galley door.

"Where were you when I went forward?"

"I must have been here."

"This galley was empty when I passed."

"I might have been in the forecastle or half a dozen other places, makin' ready to cook supper."

Fortunately for the boy, there was a quantity of stores on one of the lockers as if recently placed there, and the mate must have believed that the cook had been attending to his duties, for he did not continue the questions, but said with a bullying air:

"You are to walk a chalk-mark from this on, young fellow. If I see you so much as speak to one of the crew, I'll beat your brains out with a belaying-pin and take my chances afterward. It was all very well for you to threaten; I'm obliged to you for doing it, because it has put me on my guard, and now I know what to expect. When I'm off duty, the captain will have his eye on you. There is to be no more loafing forward after your work is done. The moment you are through with supper, go into your cabin and stay there. Do you hear?"

"I hear what you say," Winn replied, taking good care not to speak defiantly.

"Then see that you obey orders an' keep your tongue between your teeth. That is your only chance of ever seeing Cocos Island."

With this threat Mr. Bartholomew Gerry walked aft, and the watch below was summoned to take their trick on deck.

Joe Savage, being relieved from the wheel, came directly toward the galley, and, looking out, Winn saw that the mate was following him closely.

Pretending to be deeply engaged in his culinary operations, the boy kept his head bent, lest Joe, ignorant of Gerry's proximity, should say something which might betray the fact of their having spoken together regarding the conversation in the cabin, and the sailor was quick to take the hint.

Without so much as turning his head, he continued on past the galley, crying as he went toward the forecastle:

"I want a pannikin of tea, cookie, and see that you have it ready!"

This apparently disarmed Mr. Gerry's suspicions, for he returned aft in time to meet Captain Jim, who, in the absence of another mate, was standing watch and watch with his partner.

Glancing out the corner of his eye Winn saw the two men engage in conversation, and a few moments later Gerry, after a long, searching look in the direction of the galley, went below.

There could be no question but that he had instructed the captain to prevent the cook from talking with the crew, yet Winn believed the time had come when it would be possible to make a confidant of Joe Savage, and knew full well that whatever he did in this direction must be done without delay.

The boy knew that, after having overheard the conversation between the captain and the mate, Joe

Savage would make every effort to have a private conversation with him at the earliest possible moment, and therefore he remained on the alert while attending to his duties.

Nor was he mistaken. Twenty minutes later the captain went below, although it was his trick on deck. The "Flying Scud" needed but little watching this afternoon, when there was hardly sufficient weight in the wind to keep the canvàs full, and no sooner had he disappeared than Joe was at the small window which opened from the forward side of the galley.

"If you have got anything to say to me, lad, and I reckon you have, it must be done quickly. I heard what the mate said about preventing you from talking with any of the crew, and it looks as if the captain was bent on the same thing, though I allow he ain't willin' to go quite so far as is that bloomin' Gerry."

"It isn't possible for me to tell the whole story in a few moments, Joe. Wait until night, and perhaps I shall get a chance to crawl into the forecastle."

"I'll go bail you can't try anything of that sort. If you ain't locked up in your room it will be a surprise to me. Where's this 'ere bloomin' schooner bound to, anyway?"

"An island in the Indian Ocean."

"An' this talk about a tradin' voyage is all guff, eh?"

Instead of replying to the question, Winn said gravely:

"Look here, Joe; I don't want to make any trouble on board this vessel, and at the same time I must prevent the mate from getting me into hot water. Now I'll tell you all I know about where we're going, if you'll agree to stand by me an' not let on to any of the rest that I've said a word."

"I'll agree to the first part of it quick enough, but as for the second I ain't so certain. If this 'ere is a thing my mates oughter know about, or if we're runnin' our necks into some kind of a lawyer's noose, why then it wouldn't be fair an' above board for me to hold my tongue."

"You can't be gettin' into any difficulty with the law."

"Then I'll agree to keep my tongue between my teeth."

In the fewest possible words Winn gave the outlines of the story, beginning from the time when the two men overheard old Manuel's account of the buried treasure, and, as may well be imagined, all the while keeping strict watch lest Captain Jim should come upon him unawares.

Joe Savage listened in open-mouthed astonish-

ment, not interrupting by so much as a long-drawn breath; but when Winn had concluded he smote his open palm with his fist as he exclaimed:

"So that's the kind of a tune we're to dance by, is it? Bound on a treasure-huntin' cruise, an' that's something no good ever comes of! Why, I was shipmate once with a man what set out on the same kind of a voyage, an' every bloomin' one of 'em went to the bottom but him. Why? 'Cause they was huntin' for treasure what wasn't to be dug by livin' man. I sailed in the ship 'Antelope' with two black cats aboard; but that wasn't a marker alongside of what we're doin' now. Treasure hunting! Why, lad, there ain't a man in the forecastle who'd have signed papers if he'd knowed what I know now."

"But Joe," Winn interrupted, "don't spend your time talkin' about superstitions, because the captain may come back at any minute. Unless you help me I'm bound to go under in some way or other."

"I allow that's a fact, lad. Accordin' to the way I look at it you're in a mighty tight hole, an' so are all the rest of us for that matter. See here, I'll just give the word to my mates, an' you can make up your mind this 'ere schooner don't go to any bloomin' island in the Indian Ocean, not on this voyage."

"But that wouldn't do at all, Joe. I'm bound by my promises to Manuel, and, besides, suppose the

men should refuse to continue the voyage, how could they get ashore, or if we put into a port and all hands deserted, what good is done then? Bart Gerry will get rid of me, an' he'll find crew enough to sail this vessel, even if she is bound on a treasure cruise."

It was impossible for Winn to induce his friend to talk of anything save the "hard luck" which always attended cruises of such a nature.

Joe Savage could think of nothing but the ill-fortune which was certain to attend them, and in a very short time the boy understood that he would receive no advice from the sailor until after he had recovered in a measure from his fears.

"It won't do for you to stand here any longer, Joe, because the captain will be on deck mighty soon. Try not to think of all the superstitions you have heard about such voyages, and put your mind right down to helping me. If you don't do it, Bart Gerry will—well, I don't believe he would stop at anything, for he has the same as told me so."

"I can't think he'd dare to murder you outright, lad, however hard a citizen he is. But, if I was in your shoes, I wouldn't walk too near the rail in heavy weather."

"Turn it over in your mind, Joe, and remember that I must stay on board as long as possible. There

isn't a soul among all the crew, but you, whom I can trust. Go into the forecastle, and if I don't get a chance to slip out of the room after dark, come to this window to-morrow morning or loaf 'round when breakfast is being served."

"I'll put my mind right down to it, lad, and keep it there till I've hit upon some kind of a plan, though it ain't anyways easy for one of a crew to fall afoul of the first officer of a vessel. Better let me tell all hands, and——"

"No, no, Joe. The 'Flying Scud' must not put into port after another crew because you have mutinied, for then I should be alone, indeed. Keep to yourself all I have said, and think it over."

"It'll be many an hour before I get out of my head the trouble there's bound to come to us. I had a shipmate once what had been shipmates with an old shell-back who had sailed on one of these 'ere cruises, and if you could hear the yarns he spun it would make your hair stick straight up through your cap. Why, he said——"

"There comes Captain Jim, and you must not let him see you here," and Winn busied himself over the stove, making a great clatter of pots and pans, as if to prove that he had no other thoughts than a cook should have within half an hour of the time for supper.

When the meal was served in the cabin Winn learned that the captain had made up his mind to follow the instructions of the mate implicitly, for he said, much as though ashamed of giving such a command:

"Mr. Gerry thinks it is best for you to go directly into your room as soon as you have washed the dishes. I don't want to be hard on you, boy; but you made certain threats, and for our own safety we are bound to see that you do not carry them out. Therefore, save during only such time as it is absolutely necessary for you to be in the galley, we must see that you keep in your own cabin."

"But suppose I should promise not to carry out the threat I made after Mr. Gerry knocked me down? Even a boy is bound to defend himself, and at the time that seemed to be the only way I could prevent him from beating me."

"Would you keep the promise if you made it?"

"I always have stuck to my word, although some folks think boys who live on a poor-farm can't tell the truth same as others who have regular homes."

"I'm not throwing up that you're a pauper, lad; but you understand as well as I do what mischief would come if you should tell the crew all you know."

"I'd never threatened to do so if I'd been treated as I was while Manuel lived."

"We won't talk about that part of it," Captain Jim said quickly. "If you are willing to swear that you'll never mention the subject until we give you permission, I'll see what can be done; but till then you must obey orders. It would seem queer to others that I followed the instructions of my mate; but you, who know all the circumstances of the case, can understand that we must stick together in this business or lose everything."

"I understand, captain, that there wouldn't be any need of such talk as this if you'd had your own way," Winn replied, and then he began clearing the dishes from the table, while the master of the "Flying Scud," looking thoroughly ill at ease, went on deck.

When his work in the galley was finished Winn went below in obedience to orders, and a very uncomfortable night did he spend, for even though he should obey the mate to the letter he knew the latter would find some pretext for accusing him of criminal acts, even if he did not proceed to yet greater extremities.

When Winn awakened next morning he understood from the violent movements of the schooner that she had run into a storm, and however severe it might prove to be, he must be the gainer by it, for

in heavy weather the mate would likely have all he could do to attend to his duties as a seaman, without making wretched the life of one whom he had agreed to protect.

Until this day the "Flying Scud" had been favored in the way of weather, but now she was beaten and buffeted as if the elements had conspired to prevent her from proceeding further in quest of the treasure, and Joe Savage said as he came for his morning's allowance of coffee:

"This ain't a marker alongside of what we're goin' to catch before we strike the bloomin' island you say we're bound for. That shipmate of mine what was bound on one of these 'ere wild-goose cruises told me they had howling weather from the time they started until the captain was obliged to put back on account of the crawling things that come up out of the sea, an' we're in for the same, lad."

"Now, don't be foolish, Joe. You can't expect to have a fair wind all the time, and this isn't much of a storm, is it?"

"Well, it ain't what you might call a livin' gale, but it'll pass for the beginnin' of the bad luck that's comin' to the 'Flying Scud' an' them as are on board of her."

"Did you think of any plan last night?"

"I reckon, lad, this 'ere will about suit the case. You're to——"

"What are you loafin' 'round the galley for?" Gerry shouted from the quarter-deck. "Get forward if you've got your allowance, and if not, fall back to let some other take your place. There's to be no yarns with the cook, or I'll fall aboard of you after a fashion that won't be to your liking."

"Get forward, Joe," Winn whispered nervously. "When he goes below you can come to the window again."

"He don't want to do much bullyin' with me, now I know what kind of a first mate he is," Joe grumbled; but at the same time he complied with Winn's request, and during the remainder of this day there was no opportunity for the boy and the sailor whom he had selected as his friend to speak in private, owing to the confusion which reigned.

The wind increased in force as the day advanced, and by noon the schooner was laboring so heavily that it was impossible for the cook to do more than provide hot tea or coffee for either the occupants of the forecastle or the cabin.

The "Flying Scud" was making exceedingly heavy weather of it, and understanding that it was useless for him to remain at his post of duty, Winn decided to go aft, if indeed that should be possible,

for there seemed every danger the galley would be carried away.

Save for the man at the wheel, the lookout forward, and the captain, who was partially sheltered by the after companion-way, no person could be seen, and it was a perilous venture for the boy even to attempt to make his way across the wave-swept decks.

However, he succeeded after a certain fashion, but at imminent risk of his life, and grateful indeed was the relief of being below, for during the past hour or more he had stood knee-deep in water the greater portion of the time.

Bart Gerry was seated at the saloon table, evidently finding it difficult to remain in the chair, and it seemed to Winn as if the fellow was beset with fear. His face was ashen pale, his lips trembled convulsively, and there was no trace of the bully left in him.

Winn was on the point of entering his room when he heard the captain shout:

"All hands on deck!"

In another moment a heavy crash above and the quivering of the schooner, as if she had struck a reef, told that the "Flying Scud" was rapidly being worsted by the elements.

CHAPTER VII.

A DISABLED BULLY.

THE shock which told of disaster to the "Flying Scud" hurled Winn with such violence against the bulkhead as to deprive him momentarily of consciousness, and when he finally staggered to his feet only to be thrown headlong again, the change in the motion of the schooner was good proof that she no longer remained under the control of her crew.

Instead of leaping from one mountainous surge to another, alternately climbing upward and plunging down as if bent on going to the bottom of the sea, she rolled to and fro, her timbers groaning and creaking as if they were about to be wrenched from their fastenings.

Although having had but little experience as a sailor, Winn understood that some serious mishap had befallen the craft, and there came into his mind the predictions of evil with which Joe Savage received the information regarding the purpose of the voyage.

It was impossible to form any idea as to what was being done on deck.

The pounding of the waves against the sides of

the helpless craft, and the creaking and protesting of each individual timber, made up such a din as was literally deafening, yet to his mind came a dim idea that he might be needed on deck.

To walk the length of the saloon was impossible, and on his hands and knees he crawled to the foot of the companion-way again, reaching that point just as the captain and Joe Savage, bearing an ominous looking burden, began to descend.

"What has happened?" he cried in alarm, and the master of the schooner replied, speaking at the full strength of his lungs in order to make himself heard above the roar of the elements:

"Open the door of Mr. Gerry's room. He has been disabled by a falling block."

It seemed the height of irony that the one man on board the schooner who was willing to work mortal injury to the boy should have been stricken down when the first fury of the tempest burst upon them, and Winn could not repress a certain sense of relief at thus learning that his enemy was, for a time at least, powerless for harm.

To bring the injured man down the companion-way was a task which caused the keenest suffering, as was evinced by the groans to which Gerry gave vent, and so loud and incessant were these that Winn feared lest he might be dying.

He did his best to render some assistance, and the captain, eager to be on deck where he was most certainly needed, relinquished his portion of the burden to the boy.

Once, twice, three times were Winn and Joe hurled directly across the saloon before an entrance to the mate's cabin could be effected, and on each occasion Gerry gave ample evidence of the pain caused by the rude shocks.

Then he was finally deposited in the berth, and Winn looked around helplessly, eager to soothe the anguish, but not certain how it might be done.

Joe Savage was a rough nurse, but one who had had considerable experience in similar accidents, and regardless of the pain inflicted, he set about ascertaining the extent of the injuries.

"I reckon one leg is broken, an' it'll be the biggest kind of luck if the rest of his bones are whole," the sailor said to Winn as if speaking of some inanimate object. "There's about two chances in a thousand that the block could fall again an' not kill the man who stood where the mate did. I allow there's precious little time for me to stay below, for the 'Flying Scud' is the same as dismasted, an' every man must do double duty just now, if we would save her from goin' to the bottom."

"Tell the captain to come down here," Gerry moaned.

"I allow, if he knows his business, he'll stay on deck," Joe replied. "This ain't a time when the master of a vessel can coddle up one man who's been hurt. With half the crew below in somethin' the same shape you are, his place is on deck. Do what you can for him, lad, an' when this 'ere blow is spent, somebody will come to relieve you."

Then, regardless alike of the mate's groans and protests, the sailor hurried on deck, and Winn, who had no experience in nursing, was forced to appeal to the sufferer for advice as to what should be done.

"Get my boot off as quick as you can, an' then pull down from the hooks some of those clothes to stuff in behind me, so I shan't be knocked about so badly when the schooner rolls," Gerry replied in a faint tone, which told that his strength was rapidly deserting him.

The boy did as he was directed, and then would have bathed the injured limb in the hope of affording some slight relief, but that the lightest touch caused the most intense pain, and during the hour which followed he could do no more than remain by the sufferer's side as best he might, while the "Flying Scud" was tossed about so violently on the angry waters.

For a time Gerry alternately raved because the captain failed to come and berated Winn for not knowing what should be done under such circumstances.

Then he relapsed into semi-unconsciousness, frequently talking at random about the buried treasure or of matters connected with his home life.

Finally, and when it seemed to Winn as if he had been alone with his enemy a full day, the captain appeared, saying as he entered the cabin:

"We've got the schooner under control at last. The backbone of the gale is broken, so I reckon we'll weather it. How are you feeling, Bart?"

The mate made no coherent reply, and Winn gave the desired information to the best of his ability.

"Joe Savage says his leg is broken."

Only the briefest examination was necessary to enable Captain Jim to understand that this diagnosis of the case was correct, and he said quickly:

"Send one of the men down here to help me, lad. We've got to do a bit of rough surgery, and I'm afraid it will be terribly rough, for I never was called upon before to set a broken bone."

"Who shall I send to you, sir?"

"Any one who can be spared."

A man by the name of Bartlett was the first whom

Winn saw when he gained the deck, and to him the message was delivered.

Then the boy looked about him in surprise, for it appeared to his inexperienced eyes as if the "Flying Scud" was a complete wreck.

Both topmasts were snapped off close to the head, and there was a raffle of spars and cordage amidships which served to make up a scene of disaster appalling to a landsman's eyes, when in reality no very serious injury had been sustained by the schooner.

"What has happened?" he asked of Joe Savage, who was standing near the main rigging clinging to the shrouds to save himself from being washed overboard by the waves which swept fore and aft at every plunge made by the crippled vessel.

"I reckon you may see that for yourself, lad. But s'pose we go into the galley? I allow it can be done, an' perhaps the place ain't drowned out so but that we'll be able to start a fire. The crew will be needin' somethin' in the way of grub as soon as it can be made ready."

During fully ten minutes the two struggled to gain the cook's quarters, and more than once was Winn swept entirely off his feet, saving himself from being washed overboard only by clinging to Joe Savage or some of the wreckage which was being cleared away as rapidly as the men could handle it.

The galley had been flooded during the height of the gale, as might be told by a view of the interior, and unaided, Winn could have done but little toward restoring order, because the greater portion of his efforts were necessarily directed toward resisting the mad plunges of the wounded craft; but, thanks to Joe's assistance, the task was finally accomplished, and the two had ample opportunity for conversation meanwhile.

"How much damage has been done?" was the first question the boy asked.

"Our top-hamper is gone, and with it such spare spars as were stowed on deck."

"Shall we have to put into port for repairs?"

"That I can't say, lad, till I know what we've got below. From the way this 'ere craft has been fitted out, I allow we've got enough on board to put her ship-shape once more."

"How did the mate get hurt?"

"It wasn't owin' to his puttin' himself in the way of danger; that goes without sayin'. He was holdin' on like grim death to the life-line we'd stretched across the deck, when the main-topmast started, an' a block struck him just below the hip. It came within an inch of his head, an' I'd been well pleased if that bit of distance hadn't been saved, for even though he an' the captain are the only two who understand

navigation, I reckon we'd been the gainers if Gerry had followed old Manuel. As it is, though, you're better off, for with a broken leg he won't be likely to make much trouble these two months or more. We've pulled through this blow in finer shape than them as starts on a treasure-huntin' cruise have any right to expect. When the wind first broke I allowed it was all up with us, an' for no other reason than that we're bent on diggin' for hidden gold."

"But it's foolish to think the wind blew so hard simply because we're bound for Cocos Island. It would have come the same if we'd been on a tradin' voyage, as the men believe."

"That may all be, though I misdoubt it. No good ever come of sailormen mixin' up with sich business. I was shipmates once with an old shellback who——"

"Now don't spend the time spinnin' tough yarns when we've got a chance to talk, for as soon as Mr. Gerry gets over his hurt enough to take notice of what is going on, I'll be kept under his eye."

"I reckon that's true, lad; but we'll hope he's got what'll send him to Davy Jones's locker before he sets us all by the heels again."

"Joe Savage, you are actually hopin' the mate will die!" Winn cried in horror.

"Of course I am, an' it's the best thing that could

happen to sich as him. He's the same as said he was willin' to pitch you over the rail for the sake of gettin' more of the treasure than had been agreed upon as his share, an' men of his kidney better be under the sea than on top of it."

"It frightens me to hear you talk like that."

"Then you'd better brace up a good bit, lad, for if you an' our precious mate ever step foot on Cocos Island together, it's my belief there'll be more to make you afraid than honest wishes."

"There must be some way for me to take care of myself; I hoped you could hit upon a plan."

"All I can do when the mate of my vessel seems bent on mischief, is to keep a weather-eye on him, an' even then it's long odds that he'll get the best of me. I was goin' to say yesterday when Gerry yelled to me, that I'd turned the whole thing over in my mind, an' the only way out of the snarl I can see, is for you to talk to the rest of the crew as you've talked to me. There isn't a man among 'em who wouldn't stand stiff against any sich game as is bein' put up on you."

"If I should do that, Joe, the men would refuse to work the vessel, and then all hands must be taken to the nearest port charged with mutiny. A new crew might be shipped, and I should be in a worse plight than before, because I'm bound by my word to

Manuel to stick to the schooner until the treasure is found."

"In case that ever happens."

"I'm certain it is exactly where he said it was."

"I can't say it ain't; but yet my mind don't run that way, owin' to all I've heard about sich business. Howsomever, you're in good trim till the mate gets on his feet agin, an' 'twixt now and then there's no knowin' how matters will turn."

Joe was not allowed to linger longer in the galley.

Captain Jim had concluded his labor as amateur surgeon, and all hands were called upon to aid in putting the schooner into proper shape once more.

Winn was sent below to act as nurse to the invalid, and for many days he was kept so busy that anything like a lengthy conversation with his friend was out of the question.

Bartholomew Gerry was by no means a patient sufferer, and during the first week of confinement to his cabin seemed to expect constant attendance from the boy he had threatened to murder, despite the fact that the regular duties of a cook were also demanded of him.

Beyond the fact that his leg had been broken, the mate appeared to have received no serious injury, although he complained bitterly of internal pains, but the fractured bones did not knit together as

rapidly as probably would have been the case had he received the proper surgical attendance.

Under other circumstances Winn would have realized most keenly the discomforts of a voyage around the Horn; but his time was so fully occupied that, save for the intense cold and heavy weather, he knew very little of what was going on around him.

Never once did Gerry allude to the threats the boy had made; but Captain Jim kept him under constant surveillance during his watch on deck, which told plainly that the matter had not been forgotten.

Joe Savage was chosen to fill the mate's place, although he lived forward with the rest of the crew, and while the master of the vessel was sleeping there would have been many opportunities for Winn to talk with his friend if he had had any spare time.

The "Flying Scud" was in the Pacific Ocean before Bartholomew Gerry was so far recovered as to be able to leave his cabin to sit on deck, and from that moment he kept Winn constantly in view.

To Captain Jim's mystification, however, the invalid did not improve in health.

Even after it was possible for him to move around in fair weather by aid of crutches, he suffered from severe pains in his chest, and the crew decided that he would never again act as mate of the "Flying Scud."

"I can generally have some pity for a man who keeps on runnin' down after he oughter pick up," Joe Savage said to Bartlett one day; "but when I see the mate sprawled on the house snarlin' like a bear with a sore head hour in an' hour out, no matter how much time is spent on him, it seems a shame he should be allowed to live."

And the latter replied:

"If this 'ere is a tradin' voyage, an' I'm beginnin' to allow all ain't as we shipped for, he'll be of precious little service when we get down to hard work. The cook would be a sight better off if Gerry should kick the bucket some fine night."

"True for you, Bartlett, an' as I've said many a time, we'll hope he slips his wind before long."

With the possible exception of the captain, there was not a man on board the "Flying Scud" who did not heartily dislike the sick mate, even though there was no particular cause for complaint before he had been disabled.

As the schooner neared the equator Gerry was more exacting in his demands upon Winn's time, and on a certain night, after the boy had suffered an unusual amount of abuse, Joe Savage said, as the cook crept on deck shortly before midnight to escape the stifling heat of the cabin:

"I reckon you're gettin' a full dose these days, lad."

"It don't seem possible I can do all the mate expects. I try my best to please him; but everything I do is wrong, according to his talk."

"He's startin' in as he began just before the block did you a good turn, an' there's cause for it now."

"What do you mean, Joe?"

"We're gettin' mighty nigh that island where you believe the treasure is buried."

"Getting near it!" Winn repeated in surprise. "I haven't heard the captain say anything of the kind."

"He don't intend you shall; but I caught part of a confab 'twixt him an' the mate after the reckonin' was made this noon. He allows we'll come to anchor in less than forty-eight hours; but ain't countin' on lettin' the crew know till the last minute."

"It doesn't seem possible we can have sailed so far!"

"You haven't had much chance to count the days, lad, because they've kept you on the run every minute. There's more'n me to see what's goin' on, an' when Bart Gerry begins his game agin you'll have the whole crew on your side."

"I hoped he'd decided to keep the agreement made with Manuel," Winn said half to himself, and Joe added emphatically:

"Don't let your mind run on any sich chances, lad, for that bully is countin' on gettin' the best of you, same as he was when you tried to stand up for your rights."

"But he didn't get a show to send me ashore."

"That would have happened if he hadn't been knocked out of time; but from what I've heard lately I reckon he's got some plan in his ugly head that'll come hard on you."

"He's bound to have his own way unless Captain Jim has made up his mind to help me."

"I can answer for it that he hasn't, lad. This noon I heard the captain say to Gerry that he'd leave him to carry out the business, an' I allow that means trouble for you."

"I'm afraid it does," Winn said sadly, and at that moment the voice of the mate was heard calling for the cook.

Now that he had been warned, Winn could readily understand that the captain and mate were making ready for the final undertaking of the voyage.

During the following day the two spent the greater portion of their time in earnest conversation, and once Winn saw in Gerry's hands the chart given him by old Manuel.

He fancied several times that they talked together

concerning him, for one or both looked often in his direction, and the mate emphasized his remarks by threatening or angry gestures.

During this day the cook was forced to work unusually hard, and at the earliest moment, after supper had been served, the boy went into his cabin so tired that further movement seemed absolutely impossible.

His bodily weariness was so great that for the time being mental trouble was unheeded, and kindly slumber came to his relief before he had hardly more than lain down in his bunk.

When he awakened the sun was streaming in through the bull's-eye, and he sprang up in alarm, for never before had he been allowed to sleep so late, and there came instantly into his mind the thought that the time had arrived when Bartholomew Gerry was about to carry into execution some plan whereby he would be deprived of his rights under the agreement made in old Manuel's presence.

He had "turned in all standing," and was hardly out of the bunk before his hand clasped the knob of the door.

To his surprise the bolt did not yield to his efforts, and he pressed heavily against the barrier, believing the woodwork was swollen, but the door could not be opened.

Again and again he tried to effect his purpose, and then came the knowledge that he was a prisoner.

The "Flying Scud" was nearing the end of her long voyage, and Bart Gerry did not propose that the boy, who was really his partner, should have any part in the search for the Aymara treasure.

Winn seated himself on the edge of the bunk confused and terrified.

By thus locking him in his room without cause the mate showed that he was ready to employ every means to defraud Manuel Telceda's heir, and Winn had good reason to believe that his life was in gravest danger.

"He would have killed me before this if he hadn't been disabled, and now unless Joe Savage can help me, I stand little chance of being able to do as I promised Manuel."

It did not seem possible Gerry would dare, in the presence of the crew, to make a prisoner of the cook without some plausible pretext, and Winn tried once more to open the door, almost believing he had been mistaken in supposing it was locked.

After this second attempt there could be no doubt, and in his fear the poor boy beat upon the panels with his fists, shouting loudly for Captain Jim and Joe Savage.

"What are you howling about?" the mate cried from the opposite side of the barrier.

"I'm locked in here, and can't get out."

"There's no question about that, and you'll find yourself in irons if this racket is kept up."

"What right have you to do such a thing? Even if I had been hired as the cook, you have no business to shut me up in here!"

"I don't allow you ever was anything more than the cook, and precious glad you were to take the berth in order to get out of the poor-house. But we don't let thieves, whether they be paupers or sailors, run at large on this craft."

"Thieves!" Winn repeated, not understanding for the instant the drift of the mate's remark.

"That's what I said. If you'd been less of a fool, you'd have understood that it wasn't possible to carry on as you've been doin' without coming to grief."

"Do you accuse me of being a thief?" the boy cried in a rage.

"I didn't accuse you; the crew themselves proved that you were one. All the things Captain Robinson and I have missed were found in your room last night, when you pretended to be asleep. I never believed you to be an honest lad; but yet it didn't come into my mind you would steal while on ship-board,

until some of the sailors insisted your room should be searched. Now I don't propose to waste time on such a worthless scoundrel as you; make a row, and on go the irons, not to be taken off until the 'Flying Scud' is back at Fairhaven."

Winn was no longer capable of either action or speech. There could be no question but that Gerry had so laid the plot that at least some of the crew believed him to be a thief, and it surely seemed as if he was wholly at the mercy of his enemy.

CHAPTER VIII.

COCOS ISLAND.

It seemed absolutely impossible for Winn to think over the situation calmly after the sound of Bart Gerry's retreating footsteps told that the mate had gone on deck.

The one idea uppermost in his mind was that if he had risked all and made the secret known to the crew, it would have been better than thus to be branded a villain.

He knew full well that having entered upon this plan, neither the mate nor Captain Jim would dare to retreat even so far as to allow him his freedom while on board the schooner, and for their own safety they must bring such proof, when the "Flying Scud" returned to the United States, as would convict him of the crime.

Winn was not so dull of wit but that he could understand readily how the plot had been laid, for it was so exceedingly simple that a novice might have arranged at least a portion of it with the certainty of success.

Unquestionably, both the officers had complained of losing articles of value from their rooms; very likely charged certain members of the crew with theft, and it would have been but natural for the men to insist that the cook must be the guilty person, since he was the only one who had free access to the cabin.

Then it simply remained, when the proper time had come, for Gerry or the captain to secrete in Winn's apartment the articles alleged to have been stolen, and while he was below sleeping the sleep of an exhausted boy, so irritated the crew that they demanded his cabin be searched.

From what Gerry had said, it was most probable this was done on the previous night, and the goods found exactly where they had been placed by, or under direction of, the mate.

During all this wretched day Winn had no fear that Joe Savage would believe him guilty; but whether the sailor could convince his mates or not was quite another question, in view of the probable fact that the captain had stated positively that a theft had been committed.

Believing this to be true, each man would say to himself that the boy was the only one who could have stolen the goods, and on such evidence as they might, and undoubtedly would, give if occasion re-

quired, Manuel Telceda's heir must necessarily be found guilty.

During the greater portion of the forenoon Winn remained motionless in his bunk in a stupor of despair, and then he was aroused by the opening of the door.

A tin dish on which was a small quantity of cold boiled beef and ship's biscuit, together with a can of water, was shoved through the half-opened door, and Winn, believing the captain to be the visitor, leaped quickly from his bunk as he cried imploringly:

"Captain Jim! Captain Jim! *Do* let me speak with you just a minute! You can't think I stole anything!"

The door was closed and locked quickly, as if the visitor was eager to depart lest he should be forced to hold a conversation with the wronged lad, and from that time until sunset the prisoner heard nothing save the gurgle of the waves as the schooner sped on toward Cocos Island.

The food remained where it had been left. In his anguish of mind Winn had no desire for or thought of it.

An hour after sunset the prisoner fancied, from the change in the motion of the vessel, that her headway had been checked, and he sprang to the bull's-eye to look out; but from this point of

view nothing could be seen save the waste of waters.

Then, so suddenly that it caused him to start violently, came to his ears the rattle of the chain as the cable was let go, and he knew that the "Flying Scud" had arrived at her destination.

He pictured to himself the happiness which would have been his at such a moment if Manuel Telceda had lived; how eagerly he should be looking forward to the morrow when the search for the treasure would begin, and coming from such dreams to the stern reality, his sorrow and despair seemed to be increased tenfold.

Now and then he heard the footsteps of the men on deck, and later, understood that the captain and mate had gone to their respective rooms.

Then the silence was profound, and throwing himself again upon the hard bed he gave full sway to his grief born of despair.

When the violence of this outburst had abated somewhat he fancied he heard his name spoken in a whisper, and started up wondering if he had been asleep.

Then came what sounded like a gentle tapping upon the bull's-eye, and in an instant he was on his feet looking out into the gloom of night.

Nothing met his eager gaze, however, and he was

on the point of lying down again when the tapping was renewed.

This time he distinctly saw a human figure, and, opening the bull's-eye, he reached forth his hand.

It was grasped firmly as he heard a friendly voice whisper:

"Come closer, lad, for it will be a serious matter for both of us if I am found here either by the captain or my mates."

"Are you in a boat alongside?" Winn asked in surprise, trying again, but in vain, to learn how the friendly sailor could maintain his position.

"No; I'm standing on the main-chains. Have you seen that precious mate since they locked you in here?"

"He talked with me from the outside, and said I was accused of stealing."

"Ay, lad, so you are. He played his game right well, an' in such a way that it will be hard for you to prove his hand in it. After you turned in he accused Bartlett hot an' heavy of bein' a thief, and then came the question of searchin' your room, for the men declared you was the only person aboard who had full run of the cabin. I was one of the party who found the captain's watch an' the mate's money under your mattress when you was so nigh beat out that we might have turned you end for end

without your so much as movin' an eyelid. Of course I knew what the game was; but it has been up-hill work to try to make my mates look at the matter through my eyes, unless I should tell the whole bloomin' story, an' that's what's got to be done sooner or later, lad."

"Bart Gerry won't dare to keep me prisoner here a great while."

"It's his only show, an' the minute he lets you go he's the same as said it was all a put-up job. Then will come the question of who did steal the things? No, lad, you're in for it unless we can make a bold move, an' what that may be goes ahead of me."

"If the men don't believe me innocent now, they wouldn't when you had told the whole story," Winn said after a moment's thought.

"Perhaps not, lad; still there's a better show for it if we let on why the mate has jumped down on you so heavy. Whether they find old Manuel's treasure here or not, it don't stand to reason the 'Flying Scud' will lay at anchor a great while, an' before she gets under way again we've got to make up our minds whether you'll go back to the States as a prisoner, to be put into jail at the first port we make, or take your chances of desertin.' "

"But that would be the same as admitting I really stole the things."

"I know it, lad, yet it goes a long ways ahead of takin' your chances on the other tack."

While one might have counted twenty Winn remained silent, and then asked slowly:

"Is this Cocos Island?"

"I allow it is, though accordin' to the captain's talk we've only stopped here for water, an' he doesn't let on that the name of the land is down on the chart."

"Are they makin' ready to go on shore?"

"Bless you, lad, yes. The empty water-casks are on deck to give colorin' to his story of why we brought up here. All the boats are afloat, an' I allow there won't be any time wasted after daybreak to-morrow mornin.' You see in these waters, an' with sich a harbor, even a landsman knows we're like to be forced to sea at any minute. With the wind from the west, or thereabouts, we're all right; but let it come four points east or north or south, an' the 'Flying Scud' must be gotten under way. How long do you reckon it'll take 'em to do this 'ere gold huntin'?"

"Manuel thought one day should be enough."

"One day, lad?" Joe exclaimed incautiously aloud. "Why, at that rate, there's got to be a quick move made if you're to be helped out of the hole that precious Gerry has put you into. One day! Why

it's a case of slippin' off to-night, or lettin' him work his own sweet will!"

"Would you honestly advise me to run away, allowing the crew to believe I'm guilty?"

"I would for a fact, lad. If we ever make the home-port, what the crew alone can tell would make you out a thief, spite of all the lawyers in the country, an' you haven't got overly much money to hire a lot of land-sharks to pull you through."

"I'll do exactly as you say, Joe; but it is terrible to think of being left on the island, where perhaps I may never see a white man again."

"I don't allow you've got that to fear, for this 'ere group ain't so far out of the world but that vessels put in now an' then, though I'm free to admit they don't come very plentiful. Accordin' to my way of thinkin' it's a heap better than lettin' Bart Gerry keep on as he's begun."

"If it is possible for you to help me ashore I'll go."

"In case this 'ere treasure huntin' is done up by to-morrow night, I'm afraid I stand precious little chance of lendin' you a hand, lad; both watches are on deck, 'cause it's too hot in the forecastle for a Christian man to sleep there. Howsomever, I'll see what can be done 'twixt now an' daylight. Keep up a stout heart, an' if we don't outwit that precious

mate it'll be owin' to our not havin' had half a show."

Then, after thus trying to give Winn courage, when even a strong man might well have been pardoned for losing hope, the sailor disappeared, leaving the disconsolate boy standing at the bull's-eye peering out into the darkness as if there he could read the future.

Sleep did not visit the prisoner's eyes during this night when the "Flying Scud" lay, as he supposed, within a short distance of the Aymara treasure.

He listened intently in the hope of being able to learn by the faint noises which came to his ears now and then of what was being done on deck, and when the first gray light of the new day stole across the face of the restless waters, he heard the captain's voice in tones of command.

It seemed to Winn as if the men could not have had time to eat breakfast before the sound of oars told that a boat had put off from the schooner, and then in rapid succession the others followed, until he knew the last one had started.

It did not seem probable he would gain any further information until the treasure-seekers returned, which could not be until after several hours had elapsed, and the boy flung himself upon the bunk in an agony of grief.

To be kept a prisoner in the cabin where even the heat of the night was almost unbearable, while the wealth in which he had a rightful claim was being unearthed, caused him such keen distress of mind that for the time being he quite forgot what unquestionably awaited him if he should be forced to return to his native land on board the "Flying Scud."

He believed two or three of the sailors had been left behind to care for the schooner, and in such case knew that the only attention he was likely to receive would be when food was brought, and in the excitement consequent upon setting out to recover the treasure, Captain Jim might have forgotten to give any orders concerning him.

Therefore his surprise was so great as to amount almost to bewilderment when the door of his cabin opened and Joe Savage entered.

"Now, lad, you'll never get out of your trouble if you weaken iike this," the kindly-hearted sailor said as he laid his hand gently on the weeping boy's head, and springing to his feet Winn cried in amazement:

"How did you get in here?"

"Through the door, of course. It does seem as if luck had begun to set our way at last. Our precious mate says to me an hour ago, says he, 'You'll stay aboard, Savage, to care for the schooner. There's

no show for a change in the weather, an' it'll be a loafin' spell for you. That young thief must be fed, an' when it's been done you can pull away at your pipe comfortably, while the other men are sweatin' over the water-casks.' He wanted to be mighty friendly-like, but he didn't shut Joe Savage's eye."

"I don't understand why he should leave you rather than some one else."

"That's where the luck comes in, lad, an' now we're bound to take advantage of it before the treasure-hunters are aboard agin. What do you say to a breath of fresh air?"

"Isn't there any danger they will see us from the shore?"

"Not if you're careful. First get into the cabin pantry to fill yourself up, an' then sneak on deck where we'll have a chat."

"I'll go up at once. I'm not hungry, an' it doesn't seem as if I ever would be again."

"Now see here, Winn Burbridge, we'll start fair from this point. You're bound to eat if you count on ever gettin' the best of Bart Gerry, an' I'll never so much as raise a hand toward helpin' out if you go back on your grub jest when it's most needed."

"I'll do as you say," Winn replied meekly as he started toward the pantry, and Joe went on deck, saying cheerily as he ascended the companion-way:

"Make a hearty breakfast, lad, an' I'll stand watch meanwhile, for it would be a rough joke if that precious mate should take it into his head to turn back sudden-like."

Five minutes later the boy appeared on deck, taking good care not to show himself above the rail, and Joe beckoned for him to come within the shelter of the weather-rail, where he was lying at full length as if thoroughly enjoying the situation.

"It didn't take you many minutes to fill up; but short as the time was I've thought out a plan which is likely to work, an' what's more, it's the only thing I can get through my thick head."

"About me, do you mean?"

"Sure; who else would I be studyin' over jest now? If what old Manuel said about the treasure was true, it stands to reason they will begin loadin' gold before nightfall, an' we'll be under way agin mighty soon. Here's a chance for you to say good-by to the biggest villain Fairhaven ever raised, which is the same as if I'd said the name, Bartholomew Gerry."

"I can't see how it will be possible without a boat, unless you think I can swim ashore, an' it must be a good mile an' a half."

"A little better than that, lad, an' Mister Sharkee would have you between his teeth before you was

well clear of the schooner. I'm not countin' on anything quite so bold as that, though I've got as neat a game as was ever rigged up by a sailorman. You an' me will take our pick of the cabin stores, not choosin' more'n we can carry comfortably, an' you an' them shall be hid in the bunt of the mainsail—it hasn't been stowed, as you can see."

"Then when the schooner was gotten under way I'd be rolled out like a pea from a pod," Winn added with a mirthless laugh, and woefully disappointed because this plan had proven to be such a poor one.

"Look here, how long do you allow it'll take to bring that 'ere gold aboard, providin' it's found?"

"There must be a big pile of it."

"An' Manuel allowed it could be dug out in one day?"

"He seemed to think so."

"Then it stands to reason the crew will be a good part of the night fetchin' it aboard. After dark, an' while all hands are tumblin' around chunks of gold as if they were so many pumpkins, you should be able to slip over the rail into one of the boats that'll be alongside till we get ready to sail. I'll be nearabouts to lend a hand. We shan't be troubled with Mister Bartholomew Gerry, Esquire, because he ain't overly strong, as you know, an' knockin'

'round on shore all day is likely to pull him down pretty bad."

"But, Joe, you seem to forget that Captain Jim or Gerry will be almost certain to find out before they've been on board an hour, that I'm not in my room."

"I don't forget it, lad; it's part of my plan. I'm goin' to report that you slipped past me when I tried to hand in your breakfast, an' jumped overboard. They'll know to a ty-ty that you couldn't swim ashore, an' will allow you're sailin' 'round inside of a shark by that time. All Gerry wants is to have you out of the way, an' I'll go bail he don't fret much on account of it, because, don't you see, it winds up his game in great shape."

"But isn't it likely they'll search the schooner to make certain you're telling the truth?"

"I don't believe it; but suppose they should? I don't allow, seein's how all hands are nervous an' excited-like over findin' the gold, that they'll have sense enough to look in the bunt of the mainsail. It's bound to be a scorchin' hot place; but you can stand a bit of heat for the sake of parting company with Bartholomew Gerry."

"I'd be willing to take bigger chances if there was anything rather than this lonely island ahead of me."

"We can't make matters different in that line, my boy, and it's for you to decide whether we'll play the game or not."

"Of course I shall try it if you can't think of anything better, Joe."

"Anything better? Why, Winn, it'll be a reg'lar lark to loaf 'round that 'ere island for two or three months, an' when a ship comes along you'll have been left behind by the schooner 'Flying Scud.' Then it's a case of tryin' your luck in some other country where Bart Gerry ain't likely to run across you."

"But suppose I can't get over the rail without being seen?"

"That's the only part of the trick where we've got to take many chances, an' I believe it can be done without or more'n half tryin'; but if we fail up, you won't be any worse off than you are now."

"They'll know you told a lie."

"That won't give me any great pain. When you have to deal with sich as Bart Gerry, I claim anything crooked is straight."

Having decided to adopt Joe's plan, Winn was eager to set about the preliminaries at once, and the sailor went with him to the pantry to select such an assortment of stores as could be most conveniently carried.

Half a dozen tins of meat and biscuit; pepper, salt, a side of bacon, and a small store of tobacco were set aside by Joe as articles which would be most needed by the fugitive.

Winn objected to the tobacco on the ground that he neither chewed nor smoked, therefore it would be useless to burden himself with the stuff; but Joe was determined this particular article should form a portion of the stock.

"I'll allow you don't use it now, lad; but after you've been alone a spell it'll be reg'lar comfort to learn, so in the tobacco goes, an' we'll hope the captain or mate don't miss what we've taken."

Then Joe brought a canvas clothes-bag, a revolver and a small amount of ammunition, from the forecastle, saying as he began packing the provisions in the bag:

"I reckon this little donation of mine will come in handy, an' I don't have any great call for the collection. You'll need something to defend yourself with, an' the shootin'-iron does me about as much good as a sheath-knife would an old woman."

"It isn't right for you to rob yourself," Winn said in feeble protest.

"You needn't fear I'll do anything so foolish, lad. It would please me mightily if I could give you a better start. A good boat would be worth all this

'ere stuff, an' it may be you'll get your hands on one."

"Manuel's dory belongs to me."

"So it does; but we won't be partic'lar about pickin' her out if she ain't handy."

Then Joe set about forming a hiding-place for Winn by shaking out the sail here and there, and so arranging the folds that he would not be deprived of air.

This done, and after a series of signals were arranged between the two, so that Winn would understand when the time had come for him to venture forth, and know on which side of the schooner a boat could be found, the two made themselves comfortable in such positions as admitted of their keeping watch upon the shore.

Joe told stories of shipwrecked sailors, detailing how they had been able to better their situation, and otherwise giving Winn much good advice in the guise of a "yarn."

Again and again the two discussed the probabilities of success when the moment for leaving the schooner should come, and twice before nightfall did they eat a substantial meal.

Winn was heartened as much by the conversation as by the food, and when, shortly after sunset, the schooner's boats could be seen putting off from the

shore, the boy's courage was wonderfully good in view of the perils by which he was surrounded.

"It'll be dark by the time the foremost boat, which I allow is bringing the captain, comes alongside, an' everything is workin' your way," Joe said cheerily as he led Winn to the hiding-place. "Jump in, keep under cover a couple of hours, an' then, if they don't freight the gold aboard, you'll be stowed away on shore where Bart Gerry can't get his eye on you unless through your own carelessness."

Winn did as he was bidden, and ten minutes later he could hear the voices of the men as they swarmed up over the rail.

A full day had been spent in searching for the Aymara treasure, with Manuel Telceda's chart to guide them in the task, and the boy who had been so cruelly wronged did not doubt but that it was already in the possession of Captain Robinson and Bartholomew Gerry.

CHAPTER IX.

FREEDOM.

As may be imagined, Winn was keenly on the alert for such conversation as might give him a clew to what had been done, and how the news of his escape was received.

In the effort to ascertain this fact he was more successful than he had dared to hope, thanks to Joe, who intentionally made his report to the captain where the boy could readily overhear it.

In fact, it seemed to Winn as if the old sailor was standing within a few inches of his place of concealment when he said:

"I'm mighty sorry, Captain Robinson, to have to report that most likely the sharks have gobbled up Winn Burbridge."

"Sharks?" Captain Jim repeated.

"Ay, sir. When I carried the ungrateful little villain his breakfast, what does he do but make a rush out, upsetting me and getting on deck before I could so much as say 'Jack Robinson.' Then——"

"Didn't you have sense enough to think he might

try some such game as that?" Winn heard Bart Gerry interrupt angrily.

"I didn't allow he'd be so crazy as to go over the rail where the sharks are as thick as blackberries in 'Squire Kelly's pasture. Even if you'd warned me to look out for any sich trick, I'd 'a' said to myself he couldn't done more'n give me a chase 'round the decks for a spell. But it must have been in his head to kill hisself rather than go back to Fairhaven an' be tried for stealin', 'cause he took to the water as if he'd made up his mind for it beforehand."

"Are you certain he didn't swim ashore?" Captain Jim asked anxiously, and Gerry said with a laugh, as if the news of the boy's probable death pleased him:

"How far do you reckon he or anybody else could swim where the water is fairly alive with sharks?"

"Of course it stands to reason he didn't live many minutes after goin' over the rail. How long could you keep him in sight, Savage?"

"I never so much as saw him in the water, sir, an' allow he was gobbled up before he came to the surface."

"It's the most sensible thing he could have done," Gerry said, and to Winn's intense delight there was not so much as a suggestion made that the schooner be searched to learn if he was still on board.

Now it was only a question how long the "Flying Scud" would remain at her anchorage, and on this point the fugitive's mind was very speedily set at rest.

He heard Joe say in a tone of sadness:

"I'm afraid I'm to be blamed for the lad's death, sir," and Gerry replied promptly:

"Don't bother your head about that, my man. He showed more pluck than I gave him credit for, and was wise in doing it, for there's no question but that he'd have gotten a long term in jail if he'd gone back with us. Lend a hand there with those water-casks, for you're the only one of the crew who isn't fagged out with this day's work."

The sound of footsteps told that Joe had obeyed this command promptly, and then Winn heard the captain say in a low tone to the mate:

"We have driven the boy to his death, Bart, and all to no purpose, for it is certain some of Telceda's people have been here before us, and carried it away."

"I'm not willing to admit that," Gerry replied angrily.

"Then you're making a fool of yourself, for there's no question but that we found the place old Manuel marked out on the chart, and there's been digging done around it enough to have unearthed three such treasures as he told about."

Winn's heart beat violently, and at risk of betraying his whereabouts he pushed the canvas aside yet further in order that he might make certain of hearing the reply.

"I'll admit some one has worked in the very place Telceda said the gold was buried; but I tell you, Jim, that amount of treasure ain't carried away without such fact leaking out, and we should have heard if it had been dug up by sailors."

"I don't see why you are so certain of that. Supposing we'd found it—do you think we'd be runnin' 'round tellin' of it?"

"It would leak out in spite of all we could do, for the crew wouldn't hold their tongues."

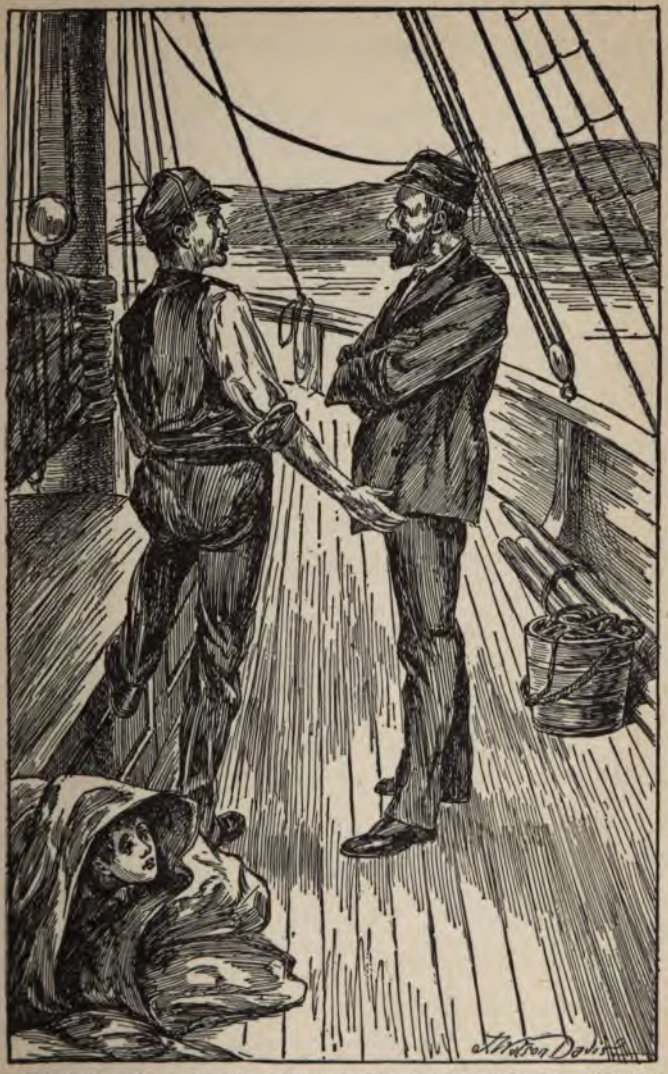
"Well, admitting, which I don't, that your view of it be correct, what do you gather from the signs on shore?"

"My idea of it is that some one who had an inkling of where the treasure might be found has been here and made a try for the gold—most likely found it."

"Then you admit that we've come on a wild-goose chase?"

"I don't admit anything of the kind."

"Look here, Bart, say what you've got in your mind an' have done with it. What's the use beating about in this fashion? If any one has dug for gold



Winn's heart beat violently, as he pushed the canvas yet further aside that he might hear the conversation.—Page 140. *The Treasure of Cocos Island.*

and found it, how can it profit us to hang on here any longer?"

"For a man who has knocked around the world as much as you have, Jim Robinson, you're the stupidest I ever saw. Did you notice anything on the beach nearabout where we landed?"

"You mean in the way of foot-prints? I saw them, and allow that some ship's crew has landed here within a short time."

"And if you'd hunted for the sign of a boat's keel on the sand, as I did nearabout where the footprints were, you wouldn't have found it."

"Go on, go on, Bart!" Captain Jim said hoarsely. "I'm beginnin' to understand what you mean!"

"You should have understood it this morning. I believe some of old Telceda's chums have been here searching for the treasure—perhaps found it; but I'll take my oath it's on the island to-night."

"That's as much as if you said they were here yet!"

"The footprints on the beach prove it."

"By heaven, if any one is here with the treasure in his possession, he'll be a poorer man when we leave!"

"That's what I like to hear, Jim Robinson; it sounds as if you might be depended on."

"Might be? Show me the man who can say my

word is not as good as my bond—I mean, it was before I started on this cruise."

"You're too soft-hearted, Jim, and for that reason I didn't talk about what I saw until we were where it's certain no one is listening. We've got rid of the boy, and will put a stopper——"

"Hold up, Bart, I'd rather not talk of the poor lad we drove to his death, for that's what we did do."

"There you go again! You may be a good captain in some ways; but when it comes to solid work you can't be depended on, and I say it again. Now, instead——"

"Boat ahoy!" one of the crew shouted, and Winn heard Gerry ask angrily:

"What's the matter with you, Bartlett? Too much liquor?"

"What's wrong with hailin' a boat when you see one?" the sailor asked surlily.

"There isn't a craft within a dozen miles of us—I *do* see what looks like a raft!" and there was something very like fear in the mate's tone as he made this last assertion.

"It's most likely a shipwrecked man," Captain Robinson said impatiently. "I wish to heaven the fellow had kept away from us till after this business is over; we've got witnesses enough already, without adding to the number just now."

So great was the confusion immediately after this remark had been made that Winn was unable to determine exactly what was being done, but a few moments later he fancied the bustle and noise had been caused by the coming on board of the stranger regarding whom the captain and mate had been speaking.

He heard Gerry say to some member of the crew:

"Let them bring the man here, and then the rest of you attend to getting supper."

It was not strange the man should give this command, for he was unable, because of weakness consequent upon his illness, to do much in the way of exercise, and probably the exertions of the day had thoroughly exhausted him.

Thus it was that Winn overheard the conversation which followed better than if he had been at liberty, for the two officers spoke in low tones as if fearful lest the members of the crew should overhear them.

"Where are you from, my man?" Captain Jim asked.

"Cocos Island."

"Do you mean this land here?" and it was evident from his tone that Gerry was surprised by the answer.

"This is the only Cocos Island I know of."

"Where were you when we landed this morning?"

"On the other side of the island where is my hut. It's the first day since landing that I haven't kept sharp watch for a sail, and to think you might have gone without my knowing of your visit until it was too late! Where are you bound for, sir?"

"Nowhere in particular just now. Tell me how you came here?"

"I was set ashore at my own request from the bark 'Mermaid.'

"In order that you might look for the Aymara treasure?" Gerry said suddenly and sharply, and Winn heard the stranger utter a low cry of astonishment.

"How do you know anything about that?" he asked eagerly.

"Did you ever hear of one Manuel Telceda."

"Hear of him? He is my friend."

"You mean he was. Telceda died on board this schooner just after we left the coast of Venezuela. We were bringing him here for the same purpose that you came."

There was a brief pause, and then Winn heard the stranger ask eagerly:

"In whose interest are you working?"

"In our own for the greater part," Captain Jim

replied with a laugh, and before he could speak further Gerry interrupted him by saying:

"We fitted out this vessel under an agreement that two-thirds of the treasure should be ours, and the remainder delivered to Telceda or his friends. We shall still hold to the bargain."

"Manuel had no right to dispose of as much as that. It belongs to our people."

"And much good will it do them. Telceda landed at Cuman and hunted in vain for any one whom he formerly knew," Captain Jim hastened to say, and Gerry added, as if his partner's method of conducting the conversation did not meet with his approval:

"We're ready to fulfil the terms of the agreement, and shall be sorry if it fails to meet with your approval, although I haven't the slightest idea who you may be."

"That matters little. It is enough if I say that not one gold piece shall be taken away on such a bargain as you claim Manuel made."

"May I ask how you will prevent it?"

"There is no need for me to do anything save hold my tongue."

"Then it was you who dug in the spot where Manuel says the gold was buried?"

"It was."

"And you have hid it elsewhere in order to defraud your people of their share?"

"Yesterday I couldn't have told why I performed such labor; but now I understand."

"Understand what?"

"That I was warned of your arrival by the spirits of my people."

At this point it seemed to Winn as if the mate lost control of his temper, for he said contemptuously:

"Warned by your grandmother! You don't want to make such talk to us, for we're not likely to listen to it patiently. Having spent several thousand dollars at the request of the man who aided in burying the treasure, we are not likely to allow the voyage to be a losing one while the gold is still here. How do you count on getting the stuff away if we're so foolish as to let you defraud us of it?"

"I shall await the arrival of another vessel, and offer to her commander one-tenth part of the whole if he will transport it and me to Venezuela."

"How many vessels have touched here since you landed?"

"Yours is the first."

"And you're likely to stay until doomsday before you'll find a captain who'll carry away millions and content himself with a tenth part."

"I have already waited nearly the full span of life

in the hope of delivering their own to my people. I can wait yet longer, and if death overtakes me with the work still undone, the failure will not be any fault of mine. Do you refuse my terms?"

"We recognize only the bargain made with Telceda," Gerry said sharply, and an instant later a cry of dismay burst from his lips.

"The scoundrel has left us!" he shouted, and added in a yet louder voice, "Forward there! Some of you fellows jump into the boat and catch that man! Don't handle him roughly, but be certain you bring him back! Lively, boys, it's worth ten dollars to the one who overhauls him."

An instant later it was impossible for Winn to guess what was being done, save that he knew the men were obeying the command, and while he remained in a fever of excitement, almost tempted to brave everything for the sake of knowing whether the capture was effected, he heard the signal agreed upon between Joe and himself.

Without hesitation he quickly made his way from among the folds of canvas, dragging after him the bag of provisions, and stood on the starboard side of the boom, uncertain in which direction to proceed until he was seized by the arm as Joe whispered:

"Now's your time, lad, and the luck couldn't be working more in our favor. All hands have taken

to the boats in the hope of earning that ten dollars, and your dory is made fast just alongside just forward of the fore-rigging. Get into her as quick as you know how."

Involuntarily, Winn glanced around and saw the captain and mate hanging over the port-rail as they urged the sailors forward in the chase, by repeating loudly the reward which would be paid to the one who first laid hands on the stranger.

At that moment the boy who was accused of theft might have walked leisurely forward and aft without attracting attention, so engrossed were the two men in the pursuit, and there was nothing to prevent him from making his escape.

"Pull well out to sea, and then circle around the schooner," Joe whispered. "Take it easy, for there's no danger, providin' you don't get too near the island until that 'ere chase is ended. I'll go ashore to-morrow, most likely, an' do my best to find you. So that you keep out of sight all will be well, for it is believed you're dead."

This much Winn already knew, and replying that he would be on the lookout after sunrise, he slipped softly over the rail.

Joe cast the painter loose, and the light night wind forced the dory away from the side of the "Flying Scud" until she was swallowed up by the darkness.

The fugitive understood fully the danger to which he would be exposed if he rowed toward the shore while the chase was in progress, and to avoid the possibility of a mistake he made no effort at directing the course of the boat until the cries of the men told that they had returned to the schooner.

No shouts of rejoicing were to be heard, therefore Winn felt confident the stranger had made good his escape; but at the time he did not realize how this might affect him in any way.

It was nearly an hour before he took up the oars, and then he had the dark shadow of the island to guide him on the desired course.

He rowed smartly past the schooner, going so near that it was possible to hear the hum of voices from her deck, and gained the shore at nearly the same point where the sailors had landed in the morning.

Here a long line of rock formed a natural breakwater where he could run the dory directly up on the beach without danger of being overturned, and once ashore there was a hymn of thanksgiving in his heart that at last he was free from those who were content only when believing him to be dead.

Now came the question as to what he should do with the boat.

His one desire was to keep her, for without a

craft of some kind it would be impossible to board any vessel which might heave-to off the island, and yet he knew the sailors would most likely find her next morning, however much time he spent in trying to hide her.

The only safe course was to set the dory adrift, and it was much like parting with an old friend when he pushed her off into deep water where she would feel the weight of the wind and current.

Many days had he and Manuel spent in that same dory, and she was the only tie which bound him to the old life that was at least free from care, even though he called the poor-farm his home.

"I'd take a good many risks for the sake of keeping her," he said with a long-drawn sigh; "but it wouldn't pay to be so foolish, for Bart Gerry would understand the whole business if he saw her."

It was too late to search for a desirable spot in which to spend the night; he must stop where he was until the sun should rise, and then see to it that he found a place of concealment, which last would not be a simple matter, since it was more than probable the "Flying Scud's" crew would overrun the island during the coming day.

Under other circumstances Winn might have thought it hard lines to be forced to sit under a tree so near the beach that the sand-fleas made them-

selves disagreeably friendly; but the knowledge that he had escaped from those who would not have scrupled to kill him in order to add to their gains, caused the discomforts to seem as nothing.

He even spent a portion of the time in slumber, and was in a certain degree refreshed when the faint line of light in the east told that a new day was about to begin.

He wished to remain so near the tiny harbor that he could have a view of all who came ashore from the schooner, in order to learn if Joe Savage was among them, and to effect such purpose it was necessary he find a hiding-place in some tree, since the densest thicket would be all too open to screen him from the inquisitive eyes of the sailors.

Not until after he had with difficulty swarmed up the third tree was he satisfied with his location, and then it seemed to him that every member of the schooner's crew might pass directly beneath where he was hidden without being able to distinguish him amid the foliage.

The only drawback to this secure hiding-place was that he would be forced to remain there many hours, in case any of the crew were left to guard the boats, for he must necessarily be in full view of any one on the beach while descending.

After no slight amount of labor he had succeeded

in drawing up after him the bag containing his stores, and once on this perch he set about eating breakfast, opening one of the tins of meat with his sheath-knife.

It would have been better had he fasted until night-fall, for no sooner had he eaten of the salt meat than thirst assailed him, and the desire was all the stronger because of the fact that he did not dare descend in order to search for water.

"I shall have to grin and bear it the best I can," he said grimly. "I'd rather go thirsty a good many hours than run the risk of missing Joe when he comes ashore. It's the last chance I'll have of seein' a white man till another vessel puts in here, for of course Bart Gerry will take good care that the fellow who came aboard last night is captured. If he has really hidden the treasure in another place, Captain Jim and Bart are bound to get hold of him if they want to handle the gold."

Then Winn saw first one boat and another put off from the schooner until all three were afloat loaded with men, and the second day's search for the Aymara treasure had begun.

"I reckon there'll be more huntin' than diggin', and I only hope the stranger will give them the slip, though I don't see how I shall be any better off whichever way it turns, for I've lost all show of ever

getting any of that gold. Even if the captain and Bart hadn't made up their minds to cheat me out of my share, this man who has been here so long would kick against my having so much as a dollar. I'll be playing in great luck now if I get away with a whole skin."

Nearer and nearer the boats came until he could distinguish the conversation of the men.

To the boy's delight he saw Joe Savage in the foremost craft, and knew that it depended only upon his own skill in avoiding the remainder of the company if he had a last interview with the friendly sailor.

Captain Robinson and Bart Gerry were also among the party, and Winn heard the latter say in a loud tone that the crews of all the boats might hear the words:

"We'll set about huntin' down the scoundrel who gave us the slip last night, and I'll pay fifteen dollars to the man who catches him, or divide that amount among all hands if more than one has a share in the capture. There's to be no shirking this day; the man who doesn't do his full duty will have a long score to settle with me."

CHAPTER X.

PETRO GARCIA.

THE reward offered by Gerry for the capture of the stranger had the effect of emptying the boats in a wonderfully short space of time after their bows grated on the sand.

Owing to the eagerness of each member of the crew, with the possible exception of Joe Savage, to earn the promised money, before either the mate or the captain could step foot on shore every man had disappeared among the foliage, and there was none left to act the part of boat-keeper.

This was most fortunate for Winn, since his place of hiding was in full view of this particular portion of the beach, and he could not have come down from the tree without being observed had any one remained on duty.

Captain Jim and the mate followed the men as rapidly as the latter's strength would permit, and once they were lost to view in the distance the boy descended, making his way cautiously through the bushes in the direction taken by the others, with the hope of coming upon Joe Savage.

In this last he was not disappointed.

The sailor purposely lingered behind his comrades, knowing Winn would be on the lookout for him, and while yet within a hundred yards of the beach the two met.

"I allowed you'd be hereabouts, lad, an' didn't run very fast after we were out of sight of our precious officers. Have you seen the man who boarded us last night?"

"It was dark when I came ashore, so I didn't dare to roam around the island very much. I was sorry to set the dory adrift."

"She was picked up just after daylight. The wind hauled 'round about midnight, an' sent her in toward the schooner."

"No one suspected that I came ashore?"

"Not a bit of it. Why, the dory wasn't so much as missed till she was sighted by Bartlett. Captain Jim an' Bart Gerry were so excited over the stranger that it wouldn't have been a hard job to steal the schooner from under their feet. The mate is worked up over the matter till he comes mighty nigh bein' in a fit all the time. Look here, Winn, has it struck you who this man may be?"

"Manuel said Petro Garcia was the only one who might have come here to search for the treasure."

"An' that's just who I allow the crew of the

'Flying Scud' are after this minute. He was an old chap, an' might have been taken for Manuel's brother."

"I hope it is him."

"How much better off would you be?"

"I should feel sure the money would go to those who have the best claim upon it, an' that was what Manuel wished."

"There ain't any certainty but that Captain Jim an' Bart can make him give up the treasure, no matter how eager he is for his people to have it."

"How could they do that?"

"By refusing to take him away from here. He must have a chance to ship his gold an' himself, or else his people will see precious little of it, an' accordin' to my way of thinkin' he had better make the best trade he can. I heard Bart say to Captain Jim last night that they'd offer to do as he wanted if he'd divide the treasure, share an' share alike."

"If it is Petro Garcia, an' I show him the paper which Manuel wrote, I'm certain he won't make such a trade as that."

"I did think the story about the gold was all in your eye, an' that the old man was kind of cracked; but now it begins to look a good deal like fact. Say, Winn, we'd better push ahead an' try to find this Petro, if it so be that's his name. I reckon if he's

been livin' here over a year he knows the island too well to allow our crew to get hold of him."

While the two conversed they were strolling leisurely through the thicket at right angles with the course pursued by the sailors, and at Joe's suggestion Winn quickened his pace as if believing speed was the only requisite in the search for this guardian of the Aymara treasure.

"You don't stand one chance in a hundred of findin' him that way, my lad. Have you got in your mind where Manuel said the treasure was buried?"

"The crew must have gone directly toward the place, as nearly as I can remember what was set down on the chart."

"Then we'll pull in a little toward the middle of the island, an' call the name 'Petro Garcia' every few minutes. Don't do too much yellin', but speak loud enough so that if he's within half a cable's length he should hear it."

This suggestion was acted upon, and the two bent their way nearer the supposed location of the treasure, but yet taking good care not to run upon any member of the "Flying Scud's" crew, continuing the blind search for half an hour or more, when, although hoping for such a reply, they were startled by receiving an answer to their hail.

An instant later a rustling among the foliage a

short distance to the right told of the whereabouts of him who had answered their cries, and looking in that direction both saw the face of a man peering out from amid the leaves.

"Are you Petro Garcia?" Winn asked, fearing lest the stranger might believe they were trying to effect his capture and seek refuge in flight before he could be questioned.

"Why do you want to know?"

"Manuel Telceda had the care of this boy, so to speak," Joe said quickly, as if fancying he could best conduct the conversation. "The old man has given a lot of writing to him about the treasure that he claimed was buried here, and it strikes me you two had better have a talk together."

"Where are the rest of the crew?" the man asked, but not venturing nearer.

"Hunting for you. The boy has been hounded by the captain an' mate mighty nigh to death, and ran away from the schooner last night when the crew started after you. There was an agreement between all hands as to how the treasure was to be divided, and before Manuel died he made the captain agree to recognize Winn as his heir. It was because of that they set about trying to get rid of the lad, an' come close to doin' it. Are you Petro Garcia?"

The man hesitated an instant, and then stepping boldly forth, replied:

"I am. Will you show me that which you say was written by Manuel Telceda?"

Winn took from beneath his garments the paper which the old Indian had given him, and Petro read a line here and there until he had gained a general idea of the subject.

"I am satisfied you are the one who was trusted by my friend. What would you have me do?"

"If you are minded, you can help this boy a good bit—that is to say, unless you come to some terms with the captain of the schooner about the treasure."

"I am ready to aid the boy if you will tell me how it may be done."

"That's what I can't rightly say. All he asks is to keep out of the way of any of our crew, because while they think him dead, he is safe so far as they are concerned. But once it's known that I lied, and he is on this island, Bart Gerry will go to any length for the sake of getting his hands on him."

"If that is all he needs I will answer for it that he have no trouble, for unless your captain spends many days in searching, he will not find my hiding-place."

"Then I reckon my part of the work is done, an' I'd better be goin' on with the crew, or they may suspect I'm playing double. If it so be we stay here

another twenty-four hours, lad, I'd like to see you once more." And Joe held out his hand to the boy he had befriended.

"I will try to keep watch of what is being done," Winn replied, shaking the sailor's hand fervently by way of adieu, "and if it happens I don't have a chance of seeing you again, Joe, remember that I realize how much you have done for me. Except for you, I'd be a prisoner on board the schooner now, and Bart Gerry could make all the mischief for me he liked."

"I'm glad I had a chance, not only to help you, but to get the best of the mate. I've had so much satisfaction out of it that we're quits, lad. But we haven't parted yet, an' I've got an idea the 'Flying Scud' will lay at anchor here a good many days before either the skipper or his partner is willing to give up all hope of getting at the treasure. Now I'd better go. Look out for yourself, boy, an' as for you, Mr. Garcia, I'd advise you not to take too much stock in anything our captain or mate may agree to. They ain't to be trusted, as Winn can tell you."

Then, without further indulging in leave-taking, Joe plunged into the tangled foliage toward that direction from which could be heard the cries of the men on the trail of human game.

Petro looked at Winn earnestly for a moment as if

on the point of asking some question, and then said abruptly:

"Follow me, and I will show you a hiding-place that your captain cannot readily find."

"Don't forget that the crew are hunting for you, and if one of them should so much as get a glimpse of me it would be known Joe Savage had told what wasn't the truth."

"They're making so much noise that it will be our fault if we are seen, and my dwelling isn't far away."

Petro walked through the thicket with the air of one thoroughly acquainted with the locality, and Winn kept close at his heels, for at times the foliage was so dense that his guide would be lost to view at a distance of a dozen paces.

When five minutes had been spent in rapid travelling, Manuel Telceda's friend suddenly made a sharp turn to the right, and then plunged into the midst of what appeared to be an impenetrable tangle of thorny shrubs.

Winn hesitated, and from out the thicket came the command:

"Push straight ahead, and take care of your face. We have arrived at the hiding-place."

It was but natural the boy should shrink from what gave promise of being a painful passage, and

just at that moment the voices of the crew could be heard in the distance.

This was sufficient to send Winn forward at a rapid pace. Had the way been beset with actual danger he would have gone on quite as rapidly, for the fear of being again in the power of Bart Gerry was so great as to overshadow almost everything else.

The tangle of thorns seemed more formidable than it really was. After forcing his way through for a distance of a yard or more he found himself amid a veritable thicket of gigantic canes, and this passed, he stood at the entrance of what appeared to be a cave leading directly under a slight elevation of the land.

Petro beckoned him on, and the two traversed the narrow tunnel-like passage, carpeted with white sand, with walls and roof of what had the appearance of limestone.

When thirty yards or more had been traversed, Winn found himself in a circular cavern, at the opposite side of which was another passage similar to that by which he had entered.

"By going through there you will come out on the shore," Petro said, pointing to this second tunnel, "and the entrance is hidden by a fringe of rocks which marks the line of coast on the east side of the

island. We are secure here, for even should your captain and his crew discover the opening through which we came, we have but to continue the flight, and one man could elude his pursuers for many days, so numerous are the hiding-places which Nature has formed. Are you hungry?"

"I am thirsty."

Petro pointed to what appeared like an excavation on one side of the cavern, and going toward it, Winn found an opening in the wall of rock through which could be seen a tiny stream of clearest water.

After quenching his thirst, the boy opened the bag he had brought, and set before his host the store of provisions taken from the pantry of the "Flying Scud."

"Of course, these didn't really belong to me, but I can't believe it was stealing to bring them away, for I have earned a good deal more by doing the cooking on board the schooner."

Petro paid but little heed to this apology.

His eyes lighted on the tobacco which Joe had insisted Winn should take, and he seized one piece eagerly, saying with a glad cry:

"This is what I have most needed, and if your captain had tempted me last night with such as this, I fear I should have been ready to make a better bargain than I now would. This island affords

food and water, but I sadly missed the Indian weed."

"If we see Joe Savage again, and you don't make a trade with Captain Jim, you can get a good deal more."

"I shan't make a trade with your Captain Jim, now the sailor tells me he is not to be trusted. Sit down there, and while I smoke for the first time in nearly a year, you shall tell me all that has happened since Manuel Telceda set out to unearth the Aymara treasure."

Winn did as he was bidden, and while he told the story Petro, having brought out a pipe from amid the collection of cooking utensils which were ranged around the pile of embers that marked the location of the kitchen, enveloped himself in clouds of smoke.

Now and then Manuel's friend and countryman interrupted the boy to ask certain questions, and again he referred to the written document which had been left in Winn's keeping, thereby delaying the narrative until the day was fully half spent.

"Had my friend lived," Petro said gravely and thoughtfully, "I would have agreed with him that three-ninths should be divided between this man Gerry, Captain Robinson and yourself, even though I believe it much too high a price to pay for the removal of the treasure. Now that Manuel is dead, I

willingly recognize you as his heir, and that share which he would take shall be yours. We will divide the wealth into six parts, after paying what may be necessary to transport it either to Venezuela or the United States, I care not which."

Winn smiled, but did not reply, and Petro asked quickly:

"What have I said to cause you mirth?"

"I was only thinking that when we started on this voyage I was to own a twentieth; after we stopped at Cuman I was to take one-ninth, and now it is agreed that I am to have a sixth; yet all the time I haven't seen so much as a single dollar."

"After the schooner has sailed, you shall look at a treasure larger than you perhaps ever heard of before."

"Is it true that you dug the gold up only to bury it somewhere else?"

Petro nodded.

"It must have been a good deal of work?"

"I have been here a year and a half, and labor becomes necessary to a man situated as I was."

"But why did you change it around? Wasn't it as safe in one place as another?"

"Two years ago Manuel Telceda and I believed we were the only persons who knew of its whereabouts. After I had visited him there came to my

ears a story told by a sailor, who claimed to have heard it from my people, in which as much was related concerning this treasure even as Manuel and I knew. Therefore, fearing lest some one might believe the man and come in search of the gold, I unearthed the entire hoard and hid it again. It was a long, arduous task, but of service to me because I was kept employed when idleness would have been most dangerous, for men alone in such places often go mad from the horrors of solitude."

"Are you willing to tell me how you got here?"

"The story is simple enough; but when I proposed to my friend that I would do this thing he said it was the act of a fool. Failing to find any one who would fit out a vessel as did your Captain Robinson, I shipped on board a bark bound for Calcutta.

"Although but a common seaman, it did not excite much curiosity that I should pick out our course on the chart, and one or the other of the crew who heard the captain give the result of his reckoning, would tell me the figures. Therefore I knew the position of the ship as well as did her master, and one night when we were nearest this island, through the aid of the man at the wheel, who believed me neither more nor less than a discontented sailor, I cut away the boat which hung at the stern-davits.

"I had a small supply of provisions saved from my

rations; but the boat, which could not be lowered, as a matter of course fell bottom up, and I was unable to right her and at the same time retain my stores.

"Therefore it was I found myself in an open boat without a sail and but one oar, more than a hundred miles from this place.

"On the first morning after deserting the bark I believed Manuel had but spoken the truth when he said such an attempt to gain the island would be the work of a fool; but yet I finally succeeded, because all efforts were for the benefit of my people, not myself. Then I vowed that the Aymara treasure should be delivered to its rightful owners, if it was within my power. It is only just that a certain portion be given those who aid me in carrying it away; but I would sooner it remained here forever than divide it in such measure as your captain proposes."

"How many days were you afloat in the boat?" Winn asked, more interested for the time being in the story of the wild adventure than in the proposed division of the wealth.

"Six, and I should have perished from thirst but that on the second day a flying fish came aboard, which served in a measure to satisfy the desire for water as well as food. On the fourth I found a cocoanut palm floating, on which were three nuts,

and the night of the sixth day came ashore in the same cove where you landed."

"How did you expect to get the treasure away after coming alone?"

"At first I had a wild idea that it might be possible to carry a certain portion in the boat which I had the same as stolen, but after unearthing it I saw that even should it be possible to make the voyage, which now I doubted, but an exceedingly small amount, as compared with the whole, could be taken in such a craft."

"Where is she now?"

"Two days after I came ashore the island was swept by a typhoon and the boat dashed to pieces. Then it was I reproached myself bitterly for having made the venture; but now I can see that a higher power than mine directed the course of events. Had I not risked my life in the attempt to gain this island, when as Manuel said it was folly to do so, your captain would this day be transferring the Aymara treasure from its long hiding-place to the hold of his schooner, and my people would be deprived of their own.

"Then see again how plainly is shown the hand of God in all this. But for the fact that you had been wronged—that the mate and the captain would have deprived you of what Manuel promised should be

yours—there would have been no reason for you to seek me out, and I might have remained alone until I died.

"Now, even if death overtakes me to-morrow, I shall yield my soul up cheerfully, because I know you will do all that a boy may to carry out the wishes of the man whom you called your friend. Thus it is that all which has been done is for the best, so far as my purpose and Manuel Telceda's is concerned."

"I will most certainly follow the instructions written down on that paper, so far as may be possible; but suppose I should be left alone on this island? How could I take such an amount of gold from here? What captain would treat with me honestly, taking one-twentieth, or even one-ninth part, for such services as I desired, when he might possess the whole?"

"That I cannot say, my boy; if I could, the whole riddle would be solved. I am satisfied, however, that it will be done as I wish, since it can be none other than God who has directed the course of events thus far. What other power could have brought you to me, and I thus learn all that my friend would have said to me?"

Winn, who had in his mind the terrible thought that perhaps many years would elapse before he could find an opportunity for leaving the island,

could make no reply to this confession of faith, and, after a pause, Petro added:

"I am satisfied that we shall succeed in such a manner as would have pleased Manuel, and we may rest content in the knowledge that One mightier than all men will lend His aid in the work I am——"

Petro ceased speaking very suddenly as he sprang to his feet, for apparently from the very entrance of the cavern could be heard the shouts of the men who were seeking to earn the reward offered by Bart Gerry.

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTURED.

WINN started toward the passage which led to the sea, for from the noise he believed the pursuers were already within that tunnel whose entrance was shrouded by the thorn bushes.

"Do not be alarmed," Petro said, reassuringly. "Our secret is not discovered yet, although it may be soon if they are allowed to search undisturbed."

"Why shouldn't we make our escape and leave them to find this place if they choose?" Winn asked, tremulously.

He had good reason for alarm, since should one of the men so much as get a glimpse of him there was every reason to suppose the most persistent efforts would be made to take him prisoner again.

After having gone so far in the attempt to ruin the boy, Gerry must, for his own safety, get Winn into his power again.

So long as the conspirators believed the lad to be dead, he was in comparative safety, and it is not surprising that his terror at this moment was most intense.

Petro stood as if undecided what course to pursue, and then, his mind evidently made up, said quickly:

"Remain here, my boy, and I will show myself long enough to lead the chase in another direction."

"But they will be certain to capture you!" Winn cried as he sought to detain the man.

"There is little fear of that, since I am acquainted with all the hiding-places on the island, and they are strangers. You must not be seen, and the only way to prevent such a disaster is for me to draw them off."

"Don't go out! Don't take the risk!" Winn cried, imploringly, and at that instant the voices of the pursuers rang out again, yet nearer than before.

"This is no time for talk," Petro said sternly, and forcibly releasing himself from the boy's detaining grasp, he ran at full speed through the tunnel-like passage.

Instinctively, Winn followed a dozen paces or more, and then realizing that by such a course he would be rendering Petro's efforts useless, stopped suddenly, walking slowly back to the circular chamber as a fresh outburst of yells told that the crew of the "Flying Scud" had caught a glimpse of their prey.

Now the voices of the men died away in the distance, and Winn ventured yet nearer the entrance,

as if fancying he might from that point learn what was taking place.

In less than ten minutes not a sound could be heard.

Petro had accomplished his purpose, but how great a price might he not be forced to pay?

Even though familiar with all the nooks and corners of the island, it was by no means improbable the sailors might prove to be as fleet of foot as himself, and a perfect fever of terror came upon the boy as he asked himself what would be his fate should this new-found friend be captured?

How long Winn remained crouching on the white sand of the cavern it would have been impossible for him to say. It seemed as if he had been there many hours when the suspense became so great as to be almost unbearable, and he crept toward the entrance, saying to himself that Petro must have been made a prisoner, otherwise he would have returned before this.

His fears made him reckless, and heeding not the danger, he ventured out amid the thicket of thorns, listening intently for some sounds which should give token of what was being done.

Save for the chirping of birds, the hum of insect life, and the distant thunder of the surf, nothing could be heard.

It was as if the guardian of the Aymara treasure, as well as his pursuers, had quitted the island, leaving the boy from the poor-farm of Fairhaven as its only occupant.

Winn stood trembling with apprehension just outside the screen of thorns, when from far away toward the opposite side of the island came a low hum of voices, growing more and more distinct until words could be distinguished, and he darted back behind the foliage, coming to a standstill when he was fully hidden from view.

Nearer and nearer approached the crew of the "Flying Scud" until the fugitive could distinctly hear scraps of conversation, and the few words which smote upon his ear with startling clearness conveyed the intelligence of Petro Garcia's fate.

"We earned the dollars in great shape, an' now we'll see if the mate flashes up the money."

It was Bartlett's voice, and there could be no question but that Manuel Telceda's friend had deliberately sacrificed himself to save the boy, who had no real claim upon him.

Now Winn was almost beside himself with fear and anxiety.

Heedless of detection, he pressed forward in the direction the sailors had taken, at times advancing so near that the hindermost would have seen him had

they turned their heads, and again lagging in the rear until the noise of their progress was almost lost in the distance.

Suddenly it was as if the men with their captive had come to a halt, and Winn knew that they were on the beach.

Moving cautiously from tree to tree, he pressed forward until through the leafy curtain he could look upon the little cove, and there saw the sailors embark.

In the foremost boat, where was Captain Jim, Petro Garcia sat, apparently indifferent to all that was taking place around him, and handling one of the oars so near the prisoner that he could have whispered to him, was Joe Savage.

This fact gave Winn a certain sense of security, so far as Garcia's ultimate fate was concerned.

His two friends were together, and it would be strange indeed if the sailor should not be able to aid the captive.

With sorrow-moistened eyes the boy gazed out over the heaving waters till he saw the boat pull alongside the schooner.

The men disembarked with their prisoner, and Winn knew that during the remainder of this day at least there was no danger of another visit from the treasure-seekers.

The brief conversation he had held with Petro convinced him that the man would not give up the secret he held, even though threatened with death, and Winn's only concern was regarding the personal safety of Manuel's compatriot.

During half an hour he stood gazing at the "Flying Scud," unable to so much as distinguish the movements of those on deck, and then, too deeply distressed in mind to remain idle, he plunged through the underbrush across the island, with no purpose in view save to occupy the time by action.

By chance, for he took no heed as to direction, the boy suddenly came upon what looked to be a deep pit dug near the foot of five gigantic palm trees, and this landmark was familiar to his eyes, he having seen it many times depicted upon the chart Manuel Telceda had made.

He was looking down upon the place where the Aymara treasure had remained hidden so many years, and by the freshly turned earth could estimate how much work the schooner's crew had already done in their vain efforts to come at the wealth.

It was also possible to determine in a certain measure the labor which had been performed by Petro.

From the size of the excavation Winn understood that months of most fatiguing labor must have been

required to remove so much of the soil, and if such was the case, how long had the descendant of the Incas worked as a pack-horse to convey the precious metal from one portion of the island to another?

With this thought came the question as to where it might be concealed, and there was a despair more keen than ever before in his heart as he said to himself that the captain and mate of the "Flying Scud," knowing that wealth amounting to millions was buried on the island, would not leave it until every foot of the surface had been thoroughly explored.

Months might elapse before they abandoned the search, and it was possible they would come upon the hiding-place in a few days.

In either case Winn was convinced that neither the descendants of the Incas nor himself would profit by the hoard.

"Captain Jim an' Bart Gerry *must* find it in time," he repeated again and again as he retraced his steps to the seashore, bent on keeping watch over the schooner, in the hope that he might see or hear something which would give him a clue to Petro's condition.

The sun sank slowly toward the western horizon, and until it descended behind the restless billows his gaze rested on nothing save the schooner rising and falling upon the swell.

No boat had put off.

It seemed impossible any of the "Flying Scud's" crew would visit the island during the hours of darkness, and for his own welfare it was necessary he should return to the cavern, for sleep and food were equally needed by him after the excitement and fatigue of the day.

He had just gained the entrance to the tunnel leading from the thorn bushes to the circular chamber before the island was shrouded in darkness, so rapidly does night come in the tropics, and he was forced to grope his way slowly into the cavern, after which no little time was spent in finding the spot where he had seen the half-charred bits of wood.

Here, thanks to the matches which Joe had insisted he should bring with him, a small blaze was kindled, and he set about making such a meal as under other circumstances would have been most enjoyable.

Then, secure in the thought that he would remain undisturbed until morning, Winn lay down upon the white sand to sleep.

He had believed slumber would come to his eyelids instantly it was summoned; but in this he was mistaken.

The anxieties which beset him were so great, so overpowering now he was alone, in comparative

safety for the time being, that his mind went from one perplexing phase of the case to another until all desire for sleep was banished.

He sat up with his back against the wall of the cavern, pushed the charred sticks together until the blaze which had died away was rekindled, and gazing into the embers as he had done on that night when Manuel Telceda first told his story, Winn tried to read there an answer to the enigma fate had presented.

It was while he thus remained, and when it seemed to him as if fully half the night must have passed, although in fact he had been in the cavern no more than two hours, that Winn was brought to a standing posture very suddenly by hearing some one near at hand whistling "Yankee Doodle."

For a moment he believed it was a dream, even though he had not fallen asleep, for it did not seem possible he could have heard such a tune on that isle in the Indian Ocean.

Then he ran at full speed to the entrance of the tunnel, groped his way through the thorn bushes, and stood motionless and silent, listening intently.

The musician was proceeding slowly, as could be told by the sound of his voice, and then the notes were checked as the whistler called softly;

"Winn! Winn Burbridge!"

It was Joe Savage, and gladsome was the cry with which Winn answered.

Guided by his voice, the sailor soon stood beside the boy whose friend he had shown himself to be, and Winn asked in surprise:

"How did you manage to get away from the schooner?"

"You see the captain an' Bart Gerry have got their hands pretty nigh full tryin' to get the secret out of Petro, an' ain't keepin' a very sharp lookout on the schooner. I made up my mind to sneak off in the dory an' take chances of its bein' known, but a better plan come into my head. So I proposed to Captain Jim that I have a look around in the hope of findin' where the money was buried. You see, while there wasn't much show of my strikin' it, there was just a chance, an' our precious officers are so keen on the scent that they're willin' to try any plan, so I'm here on lawful leave, an' I reckon we can make the same game work for as many times as I may want to come ashore while we lay here."

"What have they done with Petro?"

"He's in the saloon, with Bart Gerry on guard at the companion-way."

"Do you think they will dare to kill him, or anything like that?"

"Both of 'em know too much to put an end to the goose what can lay the golden eggs. I ain't sayin' but what he'll have a precious rough time, yet I don't think either the mate or captain dares come right down to anything more'n hard knocks, for the crew wouldn't stand it. I put a flea in Bartlett's ear by sayin's that we might get into trouble if the prisoner wasn't used decently, and he's whispered it around among the men until, if Petro Garcia should make much of an outcry, I'll warrant the ship's company would take his part up to a certain point, in order to save their own skins when we get to a home port. What kind of quarters have you got for to-night, lad?"

"Come in and see for yourself; then there will be no trouble in finding me again if you get another chance to come ashore."

Winn led the way into the cavern, after picking up some bits of half-decayed wood to serve as fuel, and Joe Savage was well satisfied with the boy's temporary abiding-place.

"Now this is what I call comfortable," he said, throwing himself on the sand in front of the fire and lighting his pipe. "I shouldn't mind taking a turn at this kind of life for a year or more, especially when I knowed there was a mine of gold outside that I could have for the carrying off, and if the 'Flying

Scud' was to sail to-morrow morning I believe I'd risk deserting."

"Would you?" Winn cried excitedly; "would you join Petro and me?"

"I would, lad; but there's precious little use to talk about it now, for you see Captain Jim and Gerry ain't goin' to give over this treasure-huntin' right away. They'll hang to Petro until the crew have to interfere, or he gives up the secret, even if it's a case of stayin' a twelve-month. Mark you, lad, five or six million dollars' worth of treasure ain't to be picked up every day by the captain of a two-hundred-and-fifty ton schooner, an' it would be worth spendin' a good many years' time if you was certain of gettin' it in the end."

"Surely they wouldn't stay here as long as that?"

"Well, of course not, 'cause in the first place the stores wouldn't hold out, and then again the crew would raise a row. But they'll stay just as long as there's a show of gettin' hold of that 'ere gold."

"Suppose the wind should come up from any quarter in the eastward?"

"Then we'd have to pull out, an' cruise 'round until it veered our way again. That's easy done, lad. This matter is goin' to be settled, accordin' to my way of thinkin', by the amount of stores we've

got, an' if you'll remember, there was a heap of grub put on board before we left Fairhaven."

"And before it is used up they may kill Petro."

"I'll answer for it, lad, that nothing so bad as that will happen, for it ain't hard work to stir up a crew of sailormen when you've got such a chance as is ours regarding Garcia. Captain Jim an' Gerry have taken a serious piece of business in hand—one that would send all of us to jail when we get home, if it was known — an' the crew of the 'Flying Scud' didn't ship for such work, so don't you worry your head about him. It stands to reason he won't have it very pleasant; but it'll come out all right after a spell."

"Why can't you help him escape?"

"I don't say it couldn't be done when them precious officers are kinder tired out, but accordin' to my way of thinkin' it ain't the wisest thing, 'cause they'd only send the crew ashore again to catch him, an' it would be the same business right over. Let the matter work itself out now, an' our time will come; that you can depend on."

It heartened Winn wonderfully to hear Joe talk in this strain, and he not only began to believe that Petro would be set free after a certain time, but had strong hopes the treasure would one day be delivered to its rightful owners.

Joe was in no great hurry to return to the schooner.

In order to make it appear that he was really searching the island for the hiding-place of the gold, it was necessary he should be absent the greater portion of the night, and he made a generous meal from Winn's stores, saying as he did so:

"You needn't fear of goin' on short allowance, even if I do make quite a hole in the larder, for it stands to reason there'll be plenty chance for me to bring things ashore 'twixt now an' the time we leave this bloomin' port."

"I'm not worried 'bout that, Joe; it does me good to see you eat."

"Then you'll be in mighty fine shape before I leave, for we in the forecastle don't get such grub as this very often. You remember, lad, I told you it was bad luck to set out on a treasure-huntin' cruise?"

"There wouldn't have been anything very hard in this one if the captain and mate had been willing to act honestly."

"It don't make any difference how it comes about, my boy, trouble is sure to follow. I had a shipmate once what dropped into a good deal such a snarl as we're in, an' he says when bad luck begins it's amazin' how long it'll hold out."

"Why, accordin' to what you said a few minutes ago, things will be all right after a while."

"Yes, lad, after a time; but 'twixt now and then we're in for a deal of trouble, or I'm a Dutchman, which I ain't. But don't get all down at the heel about that, 'cause what's comin' can't be helped, an' we'll take our medicine like men."

Then Joe told of this shipmate or that who professed to have had similar experiences, until Winn grew despondent once more, and the sailor was forced to cease his doleful yarns in order to soothe the boy.

When Joe believed it was a couple of hours past midnight, he announced his intention of returning to the schooner, and Winn insisted on accompanying him as far as the shore.

"I could find my way back in the darkness without any trouble, but there won't be any need of doin' so. I'll hang 'round the cove till I see how many boats are comin' ashore, an' then there'll be time enough to hide."

"As you choose, lad, as you choose. It'll serve at least to pass away the time, and that's all you've got to do just at present, except, of course, it is to keep up your courage. Don't get down-hearted, for things will work out our way in good season, an' I'll see to it that Petro Garcia isn't handled too roughly.

You can count on hearin' of all that's done aboard the schooner, for now that I know where your quarters are it'll be an easy matter to see you a few minutes at a time, even when all hands of us come ashore."

"If it should happen, Joe, that the 'Flying Scud' leaves this island before a great while, don't forget that you have promised to join us here."

"Trust me for that, lad. I'm turnin' the thing over in my mind, an' it strikes me I might make such a plan pay better than sailorin' at thirty dollars a month. Howsomever, that's quite a ways in the future. Here's the dory, an' you'd better not come out on the sand."

Winn halted just within the foliage, and with a good-night as cheery as if it had been spoken on the sand dunes of Fairhaven near about Manuel Telceda's old shanty, the sailor pushed off in the dory, the boy listening to the measured cadence of the oar-strokes until they finally died away in the distance.

Once more he was alone upon the island while his enemies were near at hand.

CHAPTER XII.

A NEW ARRIVAL.

DURING the remaining hours of the night Winn lounged within the line of foliage, sleeping for a few moments at a time now and then, or watching the dark smudge in the distance which betokened the whereabouts of the schooner.

With the first light of dawn, however, he betook himself to the tree which had previously served as hiding-place, intending to descend and take refuge in the cavern as soon as he saw a boat put out from the "Flying Scud."

Reassured by Joe Savage's words and predictions regarding Petro's future, Winn was not as deeply anxious as he would have been but for the visit of the sailor, and on his face was an expression very nearly akin to cheerfulness as he waited for the gloom of night to give way before the coming of the sun.

Slowly at first the new light thinned the shadows, and then with one bound, as it were, a new day had been born in the tropics, the panorama lying fair and smiling before the boy's eyes.

A low cry of surprise bordering on bewilderment

broke from Winn's lips as he gazed eastward, rubbed his eyes and gazed again as if doubting the evidence of his own senses.

The "Flying Scud" still lay at anchor in the offing, but hardly a quarter of a mile away from her a brig of five hundred tons or more was slowly forging in toward the island under the influence of the light morning breeze.

Did this second vessel form some portion of Bart Gerry's scheme, or was she a stranger which had put in by chance?

This was the thought which flashed through Winn's mind, although he was too deeply excited to put it in so many words.

Petro had been on the island a year and a half without having seen a sail in all that time, yet here were two visitors, and if at the moment Winn thought of the future it was with less anxiety than before, for surely Cocos Island seemed to be situated in a portion of the Indian Ocean frequently visited.

It can well be fancied that the boy almost forgot how necessary it was he should observe closely all which was taking place on and about the "Flying Scud," in order to leave his perch in the tree and take shelter in the cavern before the sailors came on shore, otherwise he might find himself prisoner in an exceedingly uncomfortable position.

With hardly more than steerage-way upon her, the brig crept nearer and nearer to the land, and the number of men on the "Flying Scud's" deck told that this new arrival had caused the liveliest curiosity and excitement.

Winn watched every movement keenly until the anchor was let go, the vessel swung lazily around, and a boat was lowered.

Then he slid down from his lofty perch, watched from amid the foliage until he saw that the strangers were pulling landward, evidently not intending to communicate with those on board the "Flying Scud," after which he made his way with all speed toward the cavern, for it was necessary he should remain hidden until it was possible to ascertain whether these newcomers were friends or foes.

Why the brig had come to an anchor off Cocos Island was a question which troubled him exceedingly.

From all he had learned of Petro it did not seem probable any one would visit the place unless bent on business connected with the treasure, and his mind was in a whirl as he tried in vain to solve what presented itself to him as a vexing problem.

Unless willing to take too great chances, it was necessary he remain in hiding until after having had

an interview with Joe, and wearily the hours of the morning passed until he fell asleep.

When Winn next became conscious of his surroundings it seemed as if slumber had held possession of his eyelids a long while, and he crept through the narrow passage to the entrance in order to learn how far the day was advanced.

Already the shadows were lengthening into night, and he knew that he must have slept at least six hours.

Now hunger began to assert itself, and returning to the underground chamber with an armful of such fuel as could be gathered nearabout the entrance, he built a fire, feeling secure against interruption because it seemed most likely the crews of both vessels were on board their respective craft.

A hearty supper leisurely eaten, and then he took up his station at the outer end of the tunnel, confidently believing Joe Savage would find some means of communicating with him before morning.

In this he was not mistaken, and the news brought by the sailor both delighted and alarmed him.

Shortly after night had come Winn heard the familiar strains of "Yankee Doodle" as Joe advanced whistling, and it was not necessary the boy should go out to meet him, for the sailor had noted carefully the landmarks.

"Well, lad, I'm here again, an' without much trouble," Joe said cheerily as his hands were seized by Winn when he had forced a passage through the thorny bushes. "My trick of pretendin' to search for the treasure was a great one, and smart as Bart Gerry and Captain Jim believe themselves to be, they haven't the ghost of a suspicion that I'm playing it on 'em."

"How is Petro?"

"As well as a man can be who is kept close prisoner in the cabin, where it is so boiling hot that raw eggs left on the table will be cooked hard in less'n ten minutes."

"Have you had a chance to speak with him yet?"

"We yarned together a spell this morning when the brig put in."

"What vessel is that? I have been afraid Bart Gerry had something to do with her."

"Not a bit of it, lad, and she's set both him an' Captain Jim into regular fits. They're fidgetin' 'round like a couple of calves what have lost their mother, and I reckon either of 'em would give a good stiff price to know just why the brig is here."

"I saw a boat put ashore from her this morning."

"Yes, they landed, an' at first we allowed it was to look for water; but that couldn't have been true, seein's how they had no casks with 'em."

"How long did they stay on the island? I didn't dare watch them for fear of being seen."

"Well, you bet our captain an' mate kept a mighty sharp lookout. As you know, they come ashore a bit after sunrise, an' it was nigh to noon before we saw 'em agin. It seems like as they'd picked up somebody belongin' to Manuel's tribe, who'd told 'em of this 'ere treasure, 'cause I don't allow they'd stay ashore just for the sake of a lark."

"Does Petro know anything about it?"

"He claims not to, an' I reckon he's tellin' the truth, 'cause he's terribly worked up about it. Takin' it all in all, every blessed soul aboard the 'Flying Scud' is feelin' mighty uncomfortable just now."

"I should think it would be an easy matter for Captain Jim to find out about the brig by going on board to make a visit."

"Bless your soul, lad, he tried that game about noon, an' nothin' come of it. He made out we'd put in here to refit, owing to our topmast havin' been sprung. That was one of Bart Gerry's schemes, an' we set about sendin' down the spar right soon after breakfast, so the next time you see the 'Flying Scud' she'll look as if a typhoon had struck her. Well, Captain Jim he hemmed and hawed, accordin' to his own story, talked about the island, said he'd never

been here before, an' wanted the other skipper to post him; but never a word did he get as to why the brig put in here. Takin' it all in all, he felt a good deal worse when he come back than when he went, cause why? If the brig was here for water, or anything of that kind, her skipper wouldn't have made any bones about sayin' so, an' it shows he don't count on lettin' anybody else know his business."

"Was anything done this afternoon?"

"No, except the brig has got all her boats in the water, and it's the opinion of Gerry that they'll land here to-morrow morning to make a search for the Aymara treasure. I wouldn't wonder if the mate was right. There's a queer look to the whole business, anyhow."

Winn had no remark to make. His mind was so entirely occupied with the coming of the brig and her possible mission that he could think of little else, until Joe said suddenly:

"I told you Petro and I was alone quite a spell this morning."

"How did that happen? I shouldn't suppose Gerry would have allowed it."

"That precious mate ain't any too fond of workin'. Since you've died, according to his way of thinkin', somebody's bound to look after the cabins. Captain Jim set me to work there this mornin', an' while

he an' the mate watched the brig, I had plenty of time to yarn with Petro. I reckon what we've decided on will astonish you, lad."

"What is it?" Winn asked with mild curiosity, his mind so full of these newcomers that he could give little thought to anything else.

"If it so be we can make the plan work, you'll see both of us ashore here to-morrow night."

"I thought you didn't believe it was safe for Petro to try to make his escape, because the crew would be sent after him again, and he would be worse off, having once run away."

"That was my idea before I had had a chance to talk with him; but now I'm looking at the thing different. He allows that if I can get hold of a couple of revolvers, we'll be able to hold our own in this 'ere cave so long as the 'Flying Scud' can lay at anchor, an' the whole thing looks straight enough. You see, she's bound to put to sea for a spell anyhow, as soon as the wind hauls 'round, an' that would give us a chance to keep up our stock of provisions. He says there are plenty of crabs an' oysters, an' with what I'd bring, it seems as if we'd be well fixed. Of course, our precious officers are bound to know we're here, an' the chances are they'll find this place; but two men could hold it against a hundred when you come to think of it, an' Petro has

an idea in his head that he must come ashore, if it so be I can get him off."

"If the crews of both vessels are searching for the treasure, there doesn't seem to be any question but that they will find it after a spell."

"Petro swears they can't, an' though he don't tell me where it is, I've got my suspicions that the gold is somewhere around this 'ere place, else he wouldn't be in sich terrible straits to get here."

"I can't see how you are going to get him out of the cabin while Captain Jim an' Bart are on watch."

"It may be I'm takin' a bigger contract than I can carry out; but there's a plan in my head now which stands a good chance of goin' straight, an' if it does we'll be here before midnight to-morrow."

It was only natural Winn should be delighted at the prospect of having company in his voluntary imprisonment, yet at the same time such a proposition as Joe had made seemed in the highest degree dangerous, and had it been left to him he would most likely have decided against it, at least until matters assumed a more threatening aspect in regard to Petro.

However, his opinion had not been asked, nor was it likely his advice would be welcome, therefore he contented himself by inquiring concerning the proposed method of escape.

"Last night Bartlett was put on watch at the companion-way, an' Petro allowed full swing of your cabin an' the saloon," Joe said in reply to this question. "I'm countin' on goin' aboard within an hour. I'll report to our officers that the crew of the brig have begun diggin' just beyond where we were workin'. That will settle in their minds that the craft put in here on account of the treasure, an' I'm allowin' one or both of 'em will come ashore this very night to see for themselves. Now, in case that happens, I'll offer to stand watch in the cabin, an' then all will go smooth, because it's only a question of seein' to it that the dory is alongside under the bull's-eye in your room, where it won't be a hard job to lower into her a pretty fair supply of stores. Before the treasure-hunters get back I should contrive to sneak Petro over the rail without the crew's knowin' of it, for I'm reckonin' on their turnin' in the same as usual. Of course, everything depends on Captain Jim an' Gerry doin' as I've said. If it should happen they didn't, why I'll have to cook up some other plan, that's all. Petro sends word that you're to go through this 'ere tunnel that leads out on the shore an' wait there for us, so's to help bring ashore what stores I get away with."

"But about the weapons?"

"I bought a revolver an' two hundred cartridges

of Bartlett this afternoon, an' if I can't pick up another one, I'll take the liberty of lookin' over the captain's room to see what he's got. After all that's been done since we left Fairhaven, I shouldn't call it stealin' to lug away anything I can put my hands on."

By this time there was no room in Winn's mind for thoughts of the brig or the doings of her crew.

Excited by the details of the proposed venture, he was in a state of nervous agitation which prevented him from remaining in one position many moments at a time.

Walking back and forth in front of Joe, he questioned him again and again as to the plan, until the sailor said almost impatiently:

"I reckon we've yarned long enough about it, lad, an' it's time for me to be goin' on board. Don't be disappointed in case we shouldn't show up right off, because everything must go our way before we make the attempt; but some fine night we'll do it, an' you're to be at the entrance Petro spoke about, from sunset to sunrise till you see us. Here's the revolver an' ammunition I bought from Bartlett. There's no sense in luggin' the stuff 'round any longer. Hide it somewhere in the cave, an' take precious good care of the cartridges, for they may be needed before we have finished with Bart Gerry."

Then, without a single word by way of adieu, Joe hurriedly took his departure.

Winn, who was eager to go with him as far as the shore for the purpose of passing the time, if nothing more, wrapped the weapon and ammunition in his jacket, deposited the bundle at a safe distance from the fire, and hurried out into the thicket.

The sailor had made good use of his legs, for by the time the boy gained the beach, he was a hundred yards or more from the shore, pulling vigorously toward the schooner to unfold his alleged discoveries concerning the movements of the brig's crew.

Winn watched him until the tiny boat was swallowed up in the gloom, and then he retraced his steps, so agitated concerning the proposed escape and desertion as to be hardly conscious of what he did.

Mechanically he followed the true course to the tunnel, and before entering gathered a bundle of such wood as he believed would serve the purpose of a torch, and then went into the cavern.

It was an extremely difficult task to coax the green wood into a flame, even by aid of embers from the camp-fire, and when he had done his best the blaze was so fitful that it served rather to intensify the darkness.

As nearly as he could judge by sense of touch, this second tunnel was similar to the one with which he

was already familiar. It may have been narrower, but yet it was sufficiently high to admit of his walking erect, and the floor was covered with white sand like that which formed a carpet for the chamber.

When he emerged into the open air, however, everything looked strange.

There was no foliage to conceal the aperture, but instead a mass of white boulders and rocks with needle-like points arose between him and the sea, having in the dim light the appearance of tombstones.

He drew back with a shudder, for there was something sinister in the scene which troubled him, and not until after he had remained motionless several moments as if to regain courage, did he dare venture forth.

It was not a simple matter to gain the edge of the water, even though the distance was hardly more than a hundred feet.

Half a dozen times did he make an attempt, and then it was only by a long detour to the southward that he was able to find a practicable passage.

To clamber over the monument-like rocks would have been almost impossible, and when finally he stood at the very edge of the sea he realized how thoroughly well this entrance to the cavern was guarded by Nature.

With a single man in either tunnel, a hundred could be held at bay, and now Winn understood that Petro had good cause to believe he would be safe in the subterranean dwelling, even though the most persistent efforts should be made by the crew of the "Flying Scud" to recapture him.

CHAPTER XIII.

BESIEGED.

WINN'S vigil was a weary one, and many times before it came to an end he believed Joe had failed in his purpose.

As he stood at the mouth of the tunnel looking out over the waters, he fancied he could picture in his mind the scene which was being enacted on board the "Flying Scud."

He saw before him Petro and Joe Savage, either wounded unto death, or tied hand and foot as a punishment for the attempt to escape and desert, and by this lively play of imagination he gave himself a most uncomfortable night.

Agitated and expectant as he was, every moment spent in waiting seemed fully ten, and thus before midnight had come he was looking toward the east, believing the harbinger of the new day was near at hand.

The two vessels which lay at anchor off Cocos Island appeared in the moonless night to be but faint smudges of black against the grayish sky, and save for the fact that he knew their location, Winn would

have failed to distinguish them as objects on the water.

More than once his eyes, weary with watching, caused him to fancy he saw a tiny line of black moving on the swell, and each time he discovered his mistake a certain portion of hope fled, until despair had well-nigh seized upon him.

Owing to his being stationed at this point on the shore, it was impossible to see the cove, and therefore he remained wholly in ignorance as to whether the captain or mate, or both, had been tempted by the report which Joe Savage undoubtedly made, to come on shore.

At the moment when it seemed useless to continue the vigil, a faint splashing of water caused hope to revive once more in his breast, and the noise sounded more and more distinct until he could finally see a moving object.

This time it was not fancy, but reality, and it seemed to Winn as if his heart absolutely stood still while he peered out over the surf at that which gradually assumed definite shape until it had finally resolved itself into a boat manned by two men.

Joe's plan had been successful!

Petro was free once more, and Winn would no longer be the sole occupant of the island during the lonely hours of night.

It was as if fully half his troubles were suddenly rolled away, and only with the greatest difficulty could the boy prevent himself from crying aloud in his joy.

As soon as might be old Manuel's faithful friend stepped ashore from the dory, and Winn ran knee-deep into the surf to greet him.

"This is no time for hand-shakin', lad," Joe Savage said when Winn would thus have welcomed him. "We're not so far out of the woods that we can afford to crow yet awhile. I count on tryin' to hold possession of this 'ere boat, so bear a hand while we take her into the bushes."

"But if she is found the crew of the 'Flying Scud' will know you are on the island," Winn said, as if in alarm, and Joe replied with a low laugh:

"Bless you, lad, where do you reckon they'll think I am, if not on the island, after it's found I've given them the slip? They won't be sich bloomin' idjuts as to think Petro an' me put to sea in a dory for a voyage 'round the Horn."

Winn now understood that they were taking no chances in thus attempting to hold possession of the boat, and during half an hour or more he did his full share in the laborious work necessary to secrete the small craft.

If those whom Captain Jim should send in search

came upon the dory at the very point where the men had landed it might give them a clue as to the entrance of the tunnel, therefore Joe proposed that she be carried along the shore westward for half a mile or more before he was willing to trust her to the keeping of the thicket.

During all this time hardly a word was spoken by any of the three, save when it became necessary to give some command, and in silence they dragged the little craft as far inland as Joe thought best, after which Petro led his companions by a roundabout way to the seaward tunnel.

Once in the circular cavern, Winn set about building a fire, but Joe stopped him by saying:

"We're not out of the woods yet, lad. Both Captain Jim an' Bart Gerry are most likely on the island this very minute, so it stands us in hand to be mighty careful. I reckon there's no danger our talk will be overheard; but whatever yarn-spinnin' goes on must be done in the darkness."

Petro and the sailor had brought from the schooner such stores of provisions that all three were heavily laden when the cargo was taken from the dory, and it seemed to Winn as if they had food sufficient to keep the larder well supplied for at least six months, although as a matter of fact there was not more than one-sixth as much as the boy fancied.

"Did you get another revolver?" he asked, eagerly.

"Yes, an' as many cartridges as will serve us if we are besieged a couple of months."

"But Petro, how did you get him away?"

"It was done as your friend here mapped out," Garcia replied. "The story which he told the officers was sufficient to send them ashore in great haste, and within half an hour after they pushed off the dory was laden and we on board of her."

"Wasn't anybody on watch?" Winn asked in surprise.

"One man who was forward asleep and your friend, Joe, were left in charge of the schooner, therefore my escape was not difficult."

"It went off as smooth as if the captain an' mate were tryin' to give us the show we wanted," Joe added with a chuckle. "I did think I was good for nothin' but to pull an' haul on some bloomin' rope all the rest of my life; but the way this little affair has been worked out I'm beginnin' to believe I could hold up my end with Bart Gerry in the way of deviltry. Petro has escaped, I've deserted an' you're supposed to be dead. The last part of it won't trouble Bart any, but he'll be precious hot under the collar when he knows what happened while he was on a tom-fool's errand. If it should so chance that

he gets me in his clutches agin I'll be likely to suffer; but we ain't allowin' that'll come about, eh, Petro?"

"We can hold our own here, even though twice the number of sailors which the 'Flying Scud' carries should attempt to capture us," Garcia replied, confidently. "The provisions we brought from the schooner, together with such as I have stored away, and an ample supply of water will enable us to stand a long siege without suffering, while a man in either passage can hold at bay a hundred without exposing himself to danger."

"Yes, it looks mighty fine when you figger it out; but I'm one as always counts that the weather may change, an' it ain't dead certain we shan't find our reckonin' wrong. I'm not tryin' to throw cold water—only contrivin' against the bad luck that will come if we get to feelin' cocksure everything is goin' our way."

Then Joe fell to speculating as to the reason of the brig's visit, and asked Petro if it was possible any other than he or Manuel could have given information regarding the treasure.

"All of our people know it was brought to Cocos Island, and each of those who aided in the work would have been capable of making such a chart as that drawn up by Manuel himself," Petro replied, gravely. "It is reasonable to believe the brig was

brought here by those who hoped to possess themselves of the wealth, for had they come after water, or to refit, they would have set about such work immediately. It would not be strange if some of my race had incautiously told to strangers what we did in 1821, and having learned, perhaps ever so little, of what should have been kept a secret, these men have fitted out an expedition."

"With so many hunting, it seems almost certain the new hiding-place will be discovered," Winn said, thoughtfully. "If you left any signs of the work—— Of course you buried it again?"

"Yes."

"Then why shouldn't the place be found?"

"That is impossible while we remain here."

"Do you mean to say——"

"I have buried the treasure in this cavern. The white sand of the floor could easily be replaced after an excavation had been made. To seek it, one has but to begin beneath the spot on which I have kept a fire burning. You see, comrades, I give to you this last secret of the Aymara treasure, believing sincerely in your honesty, and having faith that should my days be cut short as were Manuel Telceda's, you will take the wealth to our people, withholding for yourselves so much as will reward you amply for doing the service."

During several moments it seemed impossible for either Joe or Winn to speak.

They had supposed, and quite naturally, that Petro simply changed the location of the treasure, burying it in much the same manner as it had been buried before.

Now, however, they understood why he was so eager to make a stand in the cavern, and also realized that should enemies succeed in making their way into that place, they would hardly expect to find that for which they sought in what seemed like solid rock.

"It's a precious good idea, our comin' ashore as we did," Joe finally said. "If I'd known all this before, I shouldn't have advised you to stay on the 'Flying Scud' even as long as you did, although I ain't anyways certain how you could have gotten away from her sooner."

"All is as it should be," Petro said, contentedly. "We have come in good time; we are well supplied with food, and have weapons and ammunition sufficient to hold our own. It is as it should be."

Winn could not content himself with congratulations as to the present, but persisted in speaking of the future, of what might be done by the men on board the "Flying Scud," so far as apprehending their late prisoner and the deserter, or regarding the

possible chance that the commanders of both vessels would join forces in an attempt to come upon the store of gold and silver.

This last possibility Joe would not entertain for a moment.

"Since Bart Gerry knew how much was hidden here he has been the same as money-crazy, an' wouldn't agree to give up a single dollar, accordin' to my way of thinkin'. There's more chance of a fight between them than there is that they'll go into partnerships. Now we'd be fools to say the mate will simmer right down an' not try to do anything toward gettin' us into his clutches agin. Of course that's bound to come, an' it stands us in hand to be ready. Petro is the captain now, an' if he gives us an idee of how he counts on holdin' this place, we'll be better fitted for the work in case Bart jumps on us sudden-like."

"I do not see that there is any need to form a plan. I'll take up my station in the passage by which we entered, for it is there the greatest danger threatens. Joe will stand watch at the other entrance and the boy shall move to and fro between us to bring food, water or whatever may be needed. In addition to this, he shall do his share of the work as sentinel, by taking our places when it becomes necessary for us to sleep."

"That sounds all well enough, an' I reckon it is. Leastways I'm satisfied with it, an' now seein's we're like to be pretty busy to-morrow it wouldn't be a bad plan for you an' me to turn in, Petro. Winn hasn't been doin' so much work but that he can look out for things a spell."

"I couldn't sleep if I tried, just now," Winn said, decidedly, and instantly the two men threw themselves at full length upon the sand as if accustomed to summoning slumber at any instant.

Determined to do his full share of the labor, and in such a manner as to leave no opportunity for censure, the boy set about guarding the cavern by going through the passage which led to the thicket of thorns, and there pacing to and fro, listening intently meanwhile for any sound which should betoken the coming of enemies.

As the day began to dawn he crept through the foliage until he was at the head of the cove, which afforded the only landing-place on the island, and saw two boats, manned, as he judged, by the crew, put off from the schooner, heading directly toward where he was standing.

Now had come the time when his comrades should be awakened, and Winn ran back swiftly.

"The crew of the 'Flying Scud' are coming!" he cried as he entered the cavern, and both men arose,

although with no very great show of excitement.

"Have they landed yet?" Joe asked in a matter-of-fact tone.

"No; they've just put off from the schooner."

"Then we've got plenty of time, for it don't stand to reason they are goin' to find this 'ere cave without some search, an' we'd better get breakfast, eh, Petro?"

For reply the Indian began building a fire, and never before had embers so costly a foundation.

"What about the smoke?" Winn asked. "We might as well tell them where we are as to let it be seen."

"There is none left by the time it reaches the outer end," Petro replied, quietly. "I have spent much time making certain of that fact. We need not fear, save in the night when the fire-light is reflected by the walls of the passage, and one standing at the very entrance might possibly perceive a glint of it, as I myself have done. Therefore we will prepare our meals properly."

Not until breakfast, and a palatable one it was, had been eaten did Petro assume authority as commander, and then he said quietly to his companions:

"It is as well that we take up our stations now. It

would fill us with shame if, while we loitered here, the men made their way through the passage."

"There'd be somethin' worse than shame I'm afraid," Joe said, with a laugh, and, displaying his revolver, he went to the post already assigned him.

Petro disappeared in the opposite passage, and Winn was left to his own devices.

For a time he occupied himself by visiting the sentinels in turn, with the idea that they might require his services, but when two hours or more had been spent in this manner and he was not called upon for either food or water, he continued his duties in a more leisurely manner. And it was well he did so, for the day passed without an alarm.

When night came Petro, much against Joe Savage's wishes, left the cavern on a reconnaissance, and two hours later he returned with the information that the sailors probably went on board their vessel at nightfall.

He had neither seen nor heard anything to betoken the presence of enemies, and was so positive the search would be abandoned during the hours of darkness that he advised his companions to spend the night in slumber.

Joe was the first to awaken next morning, and Winn opened his eyes only when the sailor had come back from spying out the enemy.

"Bart Gerry hasn't given up the battle yet a while," he said to Petro as he re-kindled the fire. "Both boats are puttin' off once more, an' one is comin' from the brig. If I didn't know that precious mate so well, I'd say he'd gone into partnership with the other craft; but it don't seem possible."

The forenoon was spent much as had been the previous day, and Winn was beginning to feel confident they were secure in their hiding-place, when suddenly a loud cry as of triumph rang through the landward passage.

The boy was in the circular chamber when startled by this token that their refuge had at last been discovered, and started at full speed to station himself by Petro's side; but before the distance had been traversed a pistol-shot rang out, sounding in that confined place like the discharge of a cannon.

Immediately following it came a cry of pain, and a few seconds later Winn heard Petro shout:

"I shall defend myself to the last, as is my right, and he who attempts to enter takes his life in his hands."

By the time Winn was where he could see the sentinel who had thus made proclamation of war, all was still, and save for the fact that the odor of gunpowder hung heavy in the air, he would almost have doubted whether he really heard anything.

"Did you see any one when you fired?" he asked breathlessly.

"I shouldn't have discharged the revolver unless there had been a target before me. One of your men came by accident, I think, upon the entrance, and ventured in. I believed it wisest to do some execution rather than hold a parley, for he who strikes first strikes best, and they understand now that I will defend myself to the death, whereas had I simply said so, the word might have been doubted."

"Did you hit him?"

"I could have killed the man, but preferred to inflict a wound. It will be many weeks before he uses his left arm again."

"I don't suppose it could have been Gerry?"

"Neither him nor the captain. You had better go and tell Joe Savage what you have just learned; he will be uneasy, and we cannot afford to have him leave his post just now."

Winn acted upon this suggestion, and when the sailor heard the story he said emphatically:

"I reckon that 'ere Petro is goin' to turn out a first-class kind of a fellow, even if he does come from a no-account tribe in a no-account country. Our men will think twice before they give him a chance to shoot again, especially if him as has been wounded tells the truth 'bout how we're situated.

The battle is opened now, an' we've got to fight it out, lad, for there's no backin' down after blood is shed."

"Do you believe men who have signed articles as sailors are goin' to stand up an' be shot at?"

"Not willingly, lad; but Gerry will egg 'em on, you may be sure, an' by threats or promises of more money, I reckon he can get some of them to take a hand in the scrimmage. I wish we knew more about the crew of that 'ere brig."

Another pistol-shot was heard, and Winn needed no bidding to send him back again to Petro's side.

As before, nothing could be seen.

The smoke of burning powder filled the passage as with a cloud, obscuring even a view of the foliage just beyond, and Petro gave the desired information before the boy could ask for it.

"Another man, who evidently needed more assurance than the blood of his comrade could afford, showed himself. Whether my bullet struck him I am unable to say, because of the smoke. Tell Joe Savage he need have no fear regarding me unless I should call him by name. Then bring me some water; the smoke parches my throat."

Winn obeyed these instructions quickly, and when the message was repeated, Joe said grimly:

"Although I don't call myself any soldier, I

reckon I'm man enough not to leave my post until I'm certain it's necessary. You can tell Petro that I'll stay right here till he yells, an' if that time does come, my lad, reckonin' from what I've already seen of the man, we shall be in a mighty tight box."

The remainder of the day passed without further alarm, but the occupants of the cavern knew full well that they were besieged, and there was no longer any reason to believe Bart Gerry would call off his forces during the night.

Unquestionably some of the "Flying Scud's" crew would remain where they could watch the entrance of the tunnel, and every precaution was taken by those who were thus forced to defend themselves.

At sunset, according to Petro's command, Winn relieved Joe, that the latter might gain some sleep, and at midnight the sailor was aroused to serve in Garcia's stead.

Thus it was each of the men slept five hours, and Winn remained on duty all night.

Petro, after preparing breakfast and serving Joe, insisted that the boy should take his turn at resting, and Winn's eyes were so heavy that, despite the dangers which surrounded him, he was soon lost in the blissful unconsciousness of sleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

A PARLEY.

IT was nearly noon when Winn awoke and visited first one sentinel and then the other to learn if there had been any change in the condition of affairs.

Petro reported that the enemy remained so near the entrance that at times he could hear the hum of conversation; but after the lessons already received none were so reckless as to expose themselves as a target.

Joe, who was seated on the sand with his back against the wall of the passage, smoking contentedly. announced it as his belief that the underground dwelling would not be discovered by an approach from the shore.

"A fleet of boats might be pulled on a line with the coast, an' their crews wouldn't see the entrance to this 'ere passage because of the rocks that mask it in. I'll go bail none of the 'Flying Scud's' men will care to take an excursion this way on foot, especially when there isn't any particular reason why they should do so. I reckon Bart Gerry is restin'

easy in the idea that there's only one hole to this cave, an' allows he's keepin' us hived in. If it so be we wanted to give 'em the slip, it could be done in the night, an' without a great bit of bother."

"We'd be obliged to leave the treasure behind if we should run away."

"That's true, lad, but many a man has been willin' to turn his back on gold when his life was in danger, though I ain't sayin' it in the nature of croakin', 'cause I allow we're in pretty good shape here. The wind must haul into the eastward soon, an' then it's a case of gettin' the 'Flying Scud' under way."

Winn prepared dinner and carried a generous supply to each of the sentinels, after which he moved leisurely back and forth between the two posts, eager to do even more than his full share of guard-duty; but to this Petro would not listen.

"It is enough if you relieve us now and then, for that labor, in addition to cooking the food, will make up your full share."

With this Winn was not content, and began to argue the question, urging that he was as well able to bear fatigue as any of the party, until a hail from without brought the conversation to a very sudden close.

"Hello in there!" shouted a voice which Winn recognized as Bart Gerry's.

"Hello in there!" he repeated after waiting a few seconds in vain for a reply, and Petro asked in a tone of irritation, as if it vexed him to so much as reply to such a man as the mate had shown himself to be:

"What do you wish?"

"A five-minute talk with you."

"To what end?"

"That can soon be told after you agree to give me the chance."

"You seem to be taking it, whether we are willing to grant the request or not."

"But I want to come where you are, an' have a quiet chat. I'll agree to go away quietly whenever you say the word."

"I am not disposed to believe one who has already done what you have," Petro replied sharply.

"I'll agree to give up all weapons, an' put myself in your power, as a proof that I'm talkin' on the square."

Petro hesitated an instant, and Winn, fearing lest he was about to agree to the proposition, shook his head energetically as he whispered:

"You can't put any dependence in what he says."

"I have already had sufficient proof of that, my boy, and do not intend to take any chances."

"Well, what do you say?" Bart asked impatiently.

"There is no reason why you should enter the passage, and I give fair warning that I am ready to shoot at the first target which presents itself. You can do your talking where you are, and I'll listen so long as it pleases me."

That Gerry was not satisfied with such permission could be told from the fact that it was several seconds before he made any reply, and then he said in a tone of ill-temper:

"I reckon I'm a fool for tryin' to do you a good turn; but I'll keep on now I've begun, even if you do choose to put on so many airs. Of course, you know that a brig has lately anchored off here?"

"Yes, we know it," Petro replied curtly.

"Well, that craft is on the same errand as we are, an' it ain't likely the treasure will long remain hidden if all hands make a thorough search. Nor is it reasonable to suppose you can hold out many days with the crews of both vessels against you, and we shall make a trade with them of the brig unless you offer better inducements."

"If we are so wholly in your power, why waste time bargaining with us?" Petro asked ironically, holding his weapon in readiness for instant use in case the mate of the "Flying Scud" should be so venturesome as to show himself.

"I'm willing to tell you our side of it, an' give you

all the advantage of workin' both ends of the trade. We've come for this treasure, an' are goin' to get it, even though we stay a twelve-month. You know where it is, an' can save us a long time of searchin', for I'm willin' to admit that perhaps it'll be weeks before we find it. But with both crews workin' it shouldn't take many days, for the pile must be too bulky to be shifted around very often. What good is it to you here? If we left this island to-morrow you might stay on it till you died without seein' a chance for gettin' away, an' allowin' we give up beaten, how much better trade can you make with the next captain who puts in here?"

"I was willing to give you that which Manuel Telceda promised, and it would have repaid you for the venture a thousand times over; but it was not enough according to your ideas; you demanded the lion's share, and, intending to possess the secret by force, made me a prisoner."

"There's no need of harkin' back to what has been done. Here's the way we stand now, an' we'll live up to the bargain: You shall show us where the treasure is, an' we'll take the whole on board the 'Flying Scud' as soon as our crew can ship it. We'll carry you, an', if it's any inducement, the sneak who deserted, to whatever part of the world you choose, and the money shall then be divided into two equal

parts, you takin' one, an' we the other. Can you make a better bargain than that with any one?"

"What assurance have we of even making that bargain with you, when once the treasure is on board your vessel?" Petro asked, as if on the point of yielding.

"You have my word, an' that should be enough. As the matter stands we'll be in a position to take the whole of it if we join forces with the captain of the brig. Accept my offer, an' you get half, which, accordin' to Manuel Telceda's story, is more than any one man needs."

"Your word is too slight a staff for an honest man to lean upon," Petro replied sharply. "After the past experience I had rather you were my enemy than my friend; therefore, unless you delight in hearing yourself talk, we'll say no more about it. You can join forces at once with the captain of the brig, if it so be he is willing; but never with me."

"You'd better take time an' think the matter over before puttin' an' end to the bargainin'," Gerry cried threateningly. "If I leave this place an' go to the captain of the brig, the offer will never be repeated; but in course of a few days we shall come upon the treasure whether you will or no."

"It would have been as well had you never made the offer, for it is but a waste of breath to talk with

me after showing, as you have, what you are capable of doing."

"Then you are willin' to take the chances?"

"I am ready to accept any chance rather than treat with you or any whom you may send. He who plays the pirate by making a prisoner of one over whom he has no authority, and does not hesitate to threaten with torture a refusal to betray a sacred trust, is not to be depended upon, however desperate may be the situation. I cannot force you away from where you are, but I shall cease to reply; therefore you had best treat with the captain of the brig. He may be a better companion for you than I should prove, for as yet he doesn't know you as well."

"You'll wish your answer hadn't been quite so high an' mighty, Mr. Petro Garcia, before this business is ended," Gerry shouted in a rage. "I've given you a fair show; but it's the last, an' from this moment the Aymara treasure is as much lost to you as if you were a thousand miles from here, an' we with it in our possession."

Petro remained silent, and the parley was ended, for at that instant what appeared to be a man's head was seen at the entrance of the passage, and with the quickness of thought the report of a revolver rang out, followed by a mocking laugh which told that Gerry had had recourse to the old Indian ruse,

having probably thrust out a cap on a stick to draw the fire of the besieged.

"It was but a farce," Petro said to Winn with a grim smile, "and as such a fitting conclusion to your mate's proposition. Had his offer been accepted, it is more than likely we would be marooned here on the island, while the schooner sailed away with the wealth of my people."

"It's certain he wouldn't have kept his word, no matter what it was," Winn replied in a whisper, not daring to speak aloud lest his voice be recognized, and the crew of the "Flying Scud" be thus told that he was yet in the land of the living.

Winn had no very good idea as to how it might further their ends for him still to be believed dead, but from motives of prudence he desired that the secret should be kept yet a little longer.

"Go and tell Joe Savage what you have just heard. The sound of voices has perhaps made him uneasy, and a sharp lookout must be kept from that passage, for if the mate spoke truly as to joining forces with the captain of the brig, they may soon begin searching for another entrance to this place."

Winn ran at full speed through the cavern, passing directly over the hidden hoard which had already provoked so much trouble and inhumanity, and when

arrived at Joe's post of duty, repeated as nearly as was possible all that had been said.

"In the first place Bart Gerry was lyin', accordin' to my way of thinkin'," the sailor said when the story came to an end. "I don't believe the skipper of the brig has made any offer to him, although I'm not sayin' sich a scheme hasn't come into Gerry's head; but whether it can be worked or not is another matter. If he'd been so certain of findin' the gold there wouldn't have been any talk made. We've got it, lad, an' we'll hold it in spite of all they can do."

"Yet you must admit, Joe, that Gerry told only the truth when he said we might wait for years without having a chance to leave this island, and who shall say that the next men we talk with won't prove as hard at a bargain as those in command of the 'Flying Scud'?"

"All that may be true, lad; but I ain't allowin' we'll stop here sich a dreadful while after these villains find out they're beaten, because if us three can't manage to make a craft of some kind that will at least carry us an' a good share of the gold to Port Refuge on Direction Island, which is one of this 'ere group, then we're pretty poor sticks. I've been thinkin' the matter over for an hour, an' see our way out of it clean. I'd be willin' to take my chances in the dory. What would prevent us from takin' away

gold enough to buy a small schooner? It wouldn't cut any figger in the pile, if it's as big as Manuel an' Petro make out. Once let us beat this gang off, an' we'll work through in great shape. You can tell Garcia that these 'ere vessels won't stay at anchor twenty-four hours longer."

"What makes you think that?"

"The weather, lad. Look out!" and Joe pointed to a bank of clouds which could be seen far down to the eastward. "I'm countin' on havin' the island to ourselves for a spell, or Captain Jim ain't the sailor I've always taken him to be."

Although as yet Winn had suffered no hardship in being thus virtually kept a prisoner within the cavern, the knowledge that he would probably soon be at liberty was most pleasing, and he returned at full speed to acquaint Petro with the supposed fact.

During the remainder of the day nothing was heard of those who would possess themselves of the Aymara treasure by no other right than that of might, and before the sun set there was no longer any doubt as to the correctness of Joe's prediction.

Already the wind had sprung up from the east, and the sky was filled with ominous-looking clouds.

As a matter of course nothing of this could be seen from the passage where Petro stood guard,

while it was clearly apparent at Joe's end of the tunnel.

Winn reported the fact to the old man, who said, after a moment's thought:

"It is necessary we should know when the vessels put to sea. You shall stand guard here, and I will venture out along the coast."

"Let me do that!" Winn cried pleadingly. "I can make my way among the rocks as well as you, and there is no reason why I shouldn't have some share in the dangers."

"If one be cautious there is no danger in going along the shore until the vessels may be seen, for at a distance of a hundred yards to the southward of the entrance the eastern coast is in full view."

"I'll go, an' stay outside till those villains show what they mean to do," Winn replied quickly, and before Petro could remonstrate, had he been so disposed, the boy was running through the chamber.

Joe was not as willing Winn should venture out as Petro appeared to be, and some considerable discussion was necessary before he would allow the boy to pass.

He finally yielded to Winn's entreaties, however, and cautioning him to err on the score of prudence, rather than that of recklessness, went with him to the entrance.

"Keep the revolver in your hand, lad, an' if it should so chance that you find anybody hangin' 'round nearby, come back at once. Don't think it's manly to fight rather than run away at such a time, for our game is to keep under cover until the pirates are tired out."

There was little need for Joe to have spent his breath in such advice.

Winn threaded his way among the rocks along the coast until he was where the cove lay in full view, and during this short journey had neither seen nor heard the enemy.

Thus far the second entrance to the cavern yet remained a secret, and the guardians of the Aymara treasure could leave at will what Gerry probably believed to be their prison, should occasion require.

The boy was well rewarded for the labor, and labor it surely was to make one's way amid that mass of needle-pointed rocks which lined the coast in such numbers as to form a perfect labyrinth.

By the time he had gained the spot where both vessels could be distinctly seen, those on board the brig were already making preparations for departure. Her boats were alongside, the anchor hove short, and even as he watched she was gotten under way, not a moment too soon, for this portion of

Cocos Island was fast becoming a most dangerous lee-shore.

Then Winn saw the "Flying Scud's" boats put off, and to his surprise one of her men remained on shore.

He believed he recognized this solitary figure on the beach as Bartlett; but the distance was too great to admit of his seeing clearly.

At all events, one, if no more, was to be left behind, and after a short time of reflection Winn realized that even though the vessels were forced to put to sea, the inland entrance to the cavern must not be left unguarded.

"Bart Gerry counts on starvin' us out," he said to himself when, having waited until the schooner followed the brig, he made his way back toward the tunnel. "It's mighty lucky I came, else one of us might have walked straight out, believing all hands had gone away, an' then there would have been trouble."

"Gone, eh, an' left a guard behind?" Joe said grimly when Winn made his report. "Count on starvin' us, eh? Well, this is one of the times when Bart Gerry is out of his reckonin'. It wouldn't be a bad idee if we should turn to an' capture these 'ere guards, would it?"

"I don't see what you could make by it, an' for my part I'd rather have them outside the cave."

"Still it could be done if we were so minded. I was shipmates once with a duck what had been on a treasure-huntin' cruise same's we're meddlin' with, an' he got into a tight corner where he had to do pretty much the same thing we oughter do this minute."

"I'd rather hear your shipmate tell the story than try it myself," Winn said with a laugh, as he continued on to make his report to Petro.

The latter gave no sign either of pleasure or disappointment when told that which the boy had seen; but his face lighted up as Winn repeated Joe's remarks.

"It is most likely that two have been left behind," the old man said musingly. "There's little chance a search will be made for the other entrance to the cave, more especially while the wind is in this quarter, for the surf runs high on that side of the island at such times. Ask the sailor to come here, and do you remain on duty there for a while."

There was an expression of thoughtfulness on Winn's face as he obeyed this command, and after he had repeated the order to Joe he added:

"I believe Petro is thinking of doing exactly as you suggest, an' I'm mighty sorry."

"Why, lad?"

"Because in case you should be successful, in

addition to standing watch, we shall have two prisoners to guard, an' of course they'll know I wasn't drowned. If one or both escape after the 'Flying Scud' comes back, the secret will be out."

"I can't see how that could do you harm. Bart Gerry wouldn't be any more anxious to get hold of us than he is now; it's only the gold he's after, an' in case he should get the best end of this matter we wouldn't be allowed to trouble him. Because why? Because we'd be marooned here, that you can depend on. What a rare joke to take Bartlett prisoner with his own revolver, eh?"

"We shouldn't be any better off if we did it, an' I claim it's takin' needless risks; but there's no sense in my talking, because if you and Petro agree on anything, it'll be done in spite of all I can say."

"That's where you're wrong, lad. You've got as much voice in this 'ere business as either of us; but of course if it was a case of two against one, you'd have to give in. I don't allow there's much need of keepin' very sharp watch here; but at the same time I'd advise that you don't go to sleep while I'm away, for nobody can say what might happen."

Then with a look of content on his face, as if he believed matters would be arranged to his liking, Joe went up the passage in obedience to Petro's summons.

CHAPTER XV.

TURNING THE TABLES.

If Winn could have heard the conversation between his two comrades he would not have felt wholly at ease, for immediately the sailor was sufficiently near Petro to be able to speak without fear of being overheard, he said:

"So you are counting on trying your hand at taking prisoners, eh?"

"Do you not think it can be done?"

"Done? Of course it can. What's to prevent, if we set about the business in proper fashion? Whoever is on guard outside would no more think there was danger of our creeping up behind them than they would of a man's falling from the moon. Done? Why, Petro, the thing is the same as done when you say we'll do it."

"I didn't intend that we should do it," the old man replied with a smile.

"I allowed from what Joe said that you'd about the same as made up your mind to try the plan, and a mighty good one I thought it was. If those two fellows keep watch at this end of the cave, we're hived in till the 'Flying Scud' gets back, which may

be a week or more, accordin' to the looks of the weather now."

"I believe as you do in regard to that; but it was my intention to attempt the capture alone."

"Alone? What's the need of that? Why shouldn't I have a hand in the business?"

"Because, even though we are so certain the plan is a simple one, it may fail, and we shouldn't take too great risks. Besides, both entrances to this place must be guarded meanwhile, and the boy cannot do it alone."

"Then why shouldn't I be the one to play the game?"

"Because I believe I can do it best," Petro replied with a smile, but yet firmly. "Listen. You shall remain here, standing so near the entrance that you can come out quickly at the first call for help. I, who know the way, will go through the other passage, and creep upon the men from the rear. If it so chance only one is on duty, the work will be done in short order. If both are there it may be more difficult; but I shall succeed."

"I'd like to have a hand in it myself, for more of a lark than anything else; but I'm bound to admit you know your way around the island better'n I do, and will most likely pull through where I might fail, because of my clumsiness. If you are really count-

ing on doin' it, my idea is that there's no time to be lost."

"I will go now. Half an hour must be spent in making my way around from the coast, and at the end of that time you are to stand within a few feet of the entrance; but not so near that there is any danger they could, by coming into view suddenly, shoot you down."

Without any words of adieu, and as if he was bent on the performance of the simplest task, Petro walked down the passage until he was stopped by Winn, who asked nervously:

"Are you really goin' to try an' capture those fellows?"

"Yes, lad. I have discussed the plan with Joe Savage, and he thinks as I do, that the attempt should be made. In order to husband our store of provisions we must gather a certain quantity of food from the outside, and it cannot be done while those men are at liberty."

"But if you should——"

"There is no fear I will run into danger, lad, and by thus giving so many words to the subject we are making it appear of more importance than really is the case. Let me pass, and in an hour or less we shall have two of Captain Robinson's crew in our keeping."

It seemed as if Petro feared to hold any lengthy conversation with the boy, for having thus spoken he almost rudely pushed his way past, and Winn said to himself as the old man disappeared among the monuments of rock:

"I ain't so certain we'll have two of Captain Jim's men in our keeping. Petro seems to think it an easy matter to capture them; but he may find that they have something to say about it. I wish I could talk to Joe for a few minutes; it is going to be tough, waiting here an hour, fearing each moment that I'll hear what proves he has been worsted."

It was not possible, however, for him to hold any communication with the sailor, except by deserting his post of duty, and this last he would not have done even though the provocation had been twenty times as great.

Although Joe Savage had professed to believe the proposed plan was one which could easily be carried into execution, he was far from feeling comfortable in mind after Petro had left him.

He realized fully that the slightest miscalculation or mishap might prove fatal, and as the moments went by his doubts and fears increased until it became difficult to remain inactive while his comrade was voluntarily running into possible danger.

"There's one thing in our favor, and that can't be

gainsaid. If he comes upon 'em from behind, the odds are in his favor, an' the thing is the same as done; but suppose only one is on guard while the other, prowlin' round, plays on Petro the same trick he is counting on carrying through?"

The moments passed slowly, and although the sailor listened intently from time to time, standing within less than two feet of the entrance to the passage, not so much as a whisper could be heard.

"They are either keepin' quiet in the hope we'll show our noses, or else there's only one of them here," Joe said to himself, and just at that moment a scuffling of feet could be heard on the dry leaves outside.

There was a muttered exclamation, and Joe found it difficult to repress the cry of exultation which rose to his lips as Bartlett, with Petro walking close at his heels, holding a revolver against the man's head, came into view.

"Half the work is done without turning a hand," Joe said in a triumphant whisper, as he began to search his former shipmate for the purpose of disarming him. Then to the prisoner he added: "So long as you walk straight, Bartlett, an' don't try to give the alarm, we'll treat you in proper fashion; but once turn rusty, and Bart Gerry's style of usin' a

man won't be a marker alongside of the way we'll dish it out. Who was on duty with you?"

"Carleton," the sailor replied surlily.

"Where is he now?"

"He went down to the cove when the schooner sailed, and hasn't got back."

"Was he the only one left ashore?"

"So far as I know; but there might have been somebody from the brig."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because it's pretty near certain they put in here for the treasure, and it seems reasonable they might have wanted to keep their eyes on it same as we did."

"But you haven't had your eyes on it yet, my hearty, an' accordin' to my way of thinkin' you never will."

"Can you look after this man so far as to make certain he won't escape, or shall I find something with which to fetter him?" Petro asked.

For reply Joe took from his pocket a silk neckkerchief, and as if having had much experience in such work, tied Bartlett's elbows behind him in such fashion that it was not possible for the latter to use his arms.

"I reckon he'll stay where he is," Joe said angrily. "If he agrees to hold his tongue we won't

truss him up any more; but I warn him that at the least show of crookedness I shall shoot mighty quick, because this is a case of workin' to save my own life."

Petro did not wait to hear any further threats from Joe, but hastened down the passage once more, bent on making a second capture, and as soon as Winn heard his footsteps he cried eagerly:

"Did you give up tryin' to get the man?"

"I have caught one, and am now after the other. Be patient half an hour longer, and then there will be nothing to prevent your moving around the island at your pleasure, at least so long as the 'Flying Scud' is absent."

Then Petro disappeared among the wilderness of rocks again, and Winn regretted that he had not asked which of the sailors was a prisoner.

Meanwhile Joe Savage was adding to his fund of information regarding the treasure-seekers on board the "Flying Scud," and the prisoner, who did not appear particularly distressed at thus having been deprived of his liberty, answered all questions with apparent willingness.

"I reckon Bart Gerry stormed considerable when he found I'd taken French leave?"

"I was below when he and Captain Jim came aboard; but from what we heard next day I reckon he didn't take it very mildly."

"And he counts on getting hold of me again, I reckon?"

"That's the idea, and it looks to me as if he would do it, too. See here, Joe, you an' I've been shipmates on more'n one cruise, an' there's no reason why we should be at odds just because you an' the mate don't hitch up. I believe you're wrong in sidin' with this 'ere foreigner. Because why? Because he can't hope to hold out agin the whole of the crew."

"He seems to be doin' it pretty well so far, don't he?"

"Wait till the wind hauls 'round in the west again, an' you may sing a different tune. It can't take a great spell to starve you out of this place, an' from what I've heard said by Captain Jim an' the mate, they're ready to stay here six months, but that they'll do it."

"Six years ain't long enough, Bartlett. It may be before you leave this 'ere hole in the ground, that you'll have a better idea of it than is in your head now. I tell you we're snug just so long as it suits us to stay."

"Suppose the crew of the brig are bent on the same errand as Captain Jim is?"

"It don't make any difference if there's a hundred brigs with the crews of 'em tryin' to smoke us out.

It can't be done. What does the crew say to hangin' 'round here on a treasure-seekin' expedition when they shipped for a tradin' voyage?"

"Well, to tell the truth, they don't like it."

"Will all hands be willin' to stay six months if Bart Gerry happens to say so?"

"That's to be seen. None of 'em believe it'll take more'n a week to get the best of you, and once that foreigner is on board the 'Flying Scud' again, he'll tell what he knows."

"Then you men ain't afraid of the law?"

"How could the law touch us here where there ain't any?"

"I don't reckon it could, my hearty; but there's such things as naval ships floatin' 'round this section of the world, an' even if you don't run across one of them, you've got to get home some time. Taking an American citizen prisoner; torturing him into tellin' what you want to know, an' then robbin' him ain't safe work for sailormen. Them as follows Bart Gerry will find out so. I figgered this whole thing in my mind, and says I to myself, says I, 'Joe Savage, the sooner you take yourself away from the "Flying Scud," the better it'll be for you, an' there's no need of waitin' for wages, 'cause you want to show right from the start that you wasn't concerned in the business that's likely to lead them

as have a share in it to State's prison.' So I'm here, an' you're with me, Bartlett, an' goin' to stay one spell, anyhow. Now what's it to be? A friendly kind of a visit, or do you want to turn rusty an' make all the trouble for us you can?"

"Why, as for the matter of that, I'm willing to be as friendly as you say, so long's I can't help myself. I count on your feedin' me, an' sich as that; but I ain't the fool to kick when there's nothin' to be made by it."

"Then you'll find yourself used in proper fashion, as I said before, an' the time will come, Bartlett, when you'll thank Petro Garcia an' me for what we've done this day."

Judging from the expression on the sailor's face he had no very great faith in this last assertion; but was wise enough to hold his peace, and Joe gave proof of his friendly feelings by filling a pipe, lighting it, and placing it between his former shipmate's teeth.

"Now we'll sit down comfortable-like an' wait for Carleton to be brought in, for he's bound to come, my hearty, when a man like Petro is after him."

Bartlett made no reply, and in silence the two remained, one sitting on the ground with his back against the wall of the passage, and the other stand-

ing near the entrance where he could answer to any appeal for assistance.

Five minutes later the sound of careless footsteps told that Petro had brought his venture to a successful termination, otherwise he would have approached more cautiously.

The second man had been made prisoner, and was marched into the tunnel; but did not appear to take his capture at heart as had his shipmate.

"Hello, Joe!" he cried cheerily. "I've been troublin' my head because Bartlett an' I were to stand long watches; but your friend has put an end to all that, an' now I reckon we'll live on the fat of the land, for accordin' to my way of thinkin' you had a pretty good idea of how matters were goin' before you gave up your berth on board the 'Flying Scud.' "

"Glad to see you, shipmate," Joe replied with a laugh, "an' you ain't makin' any mistake about the way we're fixed here. How did Petro get hold of you?"

"It wasn't any hard job, seein's I hadn't an idea you fellows could leave this 'ere place while Bartlett stood watch. I was tryin' to knock down a cocoanut or two when he come up behind with his revolver, and I accepted the invitation without making too much talk. To tell the truth, old man, I ain't sorry you've done this thing, for the course our cap-

tain and mate have been steerin' hasn't been to my likin'."

"I'm glad to see you've got some sense about you, Carleton. Of course it ain't to your likin', nor to the likin' of any honest sailorman. Now I've trussed Bartlett up to keep him with us; but if you'll give me your word that there'll be no tryin' to skin out, we won't use force. You can join this little family party, an' I shan't have to waste my neckkerchiefs usin' 'em for ropes."

"I'm willin' to be lashed up, or run 'round loose-like, just as you say; but I'll agree to obey orders till further notice."

"Then we'll get along as pleasant as three kittens, an' if any scratchin' is done, Bartlett's the one who'll have to show his claws, in which case we shan't try to handle him any too tender, that's certain. Do you happen to know if you two are the only ones left here to starve us out?"

"All the brig's crew went on board when she weighed anchor, an' I'll give you my word there's no more of us."

Petro, who had lingered in the passage until this remark was made, now hastened toward Winn's post of duty, and returned with the boy a few moments later.

The expression on the faces of the two men when

the lad, whom they had believed to be dead, made his appearance, would have been comical but for the terror displayed.

"Thought he'd gone to feed the sharks, did you, mates?" Joe said with a hearty laugh. "I allowed I could pull the wool over Bart Gerry's eyes; but didn't suppose all of you would swallow it so easy. The lad is no more of a thief than you are, an' here's the whole yarn."

Then Joe told in a few words of what he himself had learned regarding the mate's plot, and how simple a matter it proved to outwit him.

"That's the kind of a man you shipped under, though you ain't to blame for signin' articles, 'cause you didn't know how black he really was; but now you've got my word an' the boy's, an' can see for yourselves what Bart Gerry is willin' to do for the sake of a few dollars."

Carleton stood for a moment as if in deep thought and then approaching Winn, held out his hand as he said heartily:

"I'm sorry, lad, that I had a hand in what was done against you on board the schooner; but with the captain and mate accusin' us in the forecastle of robbin' them, it ain't surprising that we should have hit upon you as the thief. I'm glad you got out of it so well, and hope you hold no ill-will against me."

"Of course I don't," Winn replied promptly, as he shook hands with the sailor. "Any one would have believed as you did, for who could suppose that the captain and mate of a vessel would do such a thing?"

"And they accused me of being the thief!" Bartlett cried vindictively.

"That was only to shut your eye, and make you do what you did toward fixin' the crime on this boy," Joe said. "But there's enough of this chinnin'. Let's call all hands to supper, Petro, an' make kind of a feast out'er this 'ere gatherin', seein's how everything is friendly and sociable, so to speak."

Once more Winn acted as cook, and after a plentiful amount of the cabin stores had been eaten, the two prisoners appeared quite as well content with the situation as did their captors.

The meal finished, and when each man had filled his pipe, Carleton made a proposition:

"Look here, mates, I allow you're countin' on keepin' us in this 'ere cave till Captain Jim an' the mate either get the treasure, or give up trying to find it, eh?"

"That's about the size of it, my hearty," Joe replied.

"I've had enough of such business as has been goin' on aboard the 'Flying Scud,' an' if it so be

you're willin' to take me into your mess, Joe Savage, I'll ship from this out. Don't think I'm tryin' to get a finger in the treasure we've heard so much about, because I ain't. I'll give up the wages due me, an' take hold here with you as able seaman, cook's mate, or whatever lay you're willing to give."

Instead of speaking Joe leaned forward to clasp his shipmate by the hand, after which he looked inquiringly toward Petro.

"If you answer for him it shall be as he wishes," the latter replied.

"Answer for Dave Carleton? Of course I will, and for Bartlett, too, if it so be he is minded to make the same offer."

"It seems hard for a man to give up his wages after comin' around the Horn; yet I ain't certain but it's the best trade I can make," Bartlett said thoughtfully.

"Then it's a go."

"It's a go," Carleton added, and Bartlett gravely repeated the same words.

"It was not for such a purpose that I made prisoners of you two," Petro said slowly, "yet right glad am I that you have thus decided, for it will make our work less difficult. There is treasure on this island, and its hiding place is known to me—it can be found by none other. You shall not lose your wages, men,

for if we succeed in carrying this wealth to the United States, so much of it shall be yours as will pay you twice over from the day you left port until we arrive there."

"I wasn't figgerin' on anything of that kind, Mr. Garcia," Carleton said half laughingly; "but you have made the offer of your own free will, an' I shall hold you to it, expecting meanwhile to do whatever duty a sailorman can do on shore by way of giving you fair returns for your money."

"Then we've signed new papers, have we?" Bartlett asked, and Carleton said with a laugh:

"That we have, mate, and knowing Joe Savage as well as I do, seein's he goes bail for Mr. Garcia, accordin' to my idea we've made a mighty good trade in shiftin' berths."

CHAPTER XVI.

LAYING IN STORES.

WHEN night came the threatened storm had burst upon the island; but it occasioned neither inconvenience nor discomfort to the occupants of the cavern, who, assembled in the circular chamber, which was illuminated by the cheery blaze, listened contentedly to the howlings of the tempest.

Once the prisoners had signified their desire to become comrades and the details of the matter were settled, all hands set about laying in a store of fuel, and before the rain began to fall there was such a stock of wood piled up directly over where the treasure was buried, as would suffice to keep the fire burning for many days.

It was only natural that during the evening the conversation ran mainly upon the Aymara treasure, and Petro Garcia told his comrades a story similar to that related by Manuel Telceda .

In fact, he confided freely in these new recruits, save as to revealing the present location of the hoard, and more than once repeated the promise made relative to payment for their services.

Having once seen the second outlet, Carleton and Bartlett felt no uneasiness regarding the ability of the party to hold possession of the cavern, however many enemies might be on the outside, and therefore little time was spent in speculating upon what would be done by the crews of the brig and the "Flying Scud."

As if positive they would triumph in due course of time, the men talked only of the future, and laid plans for leaving the island once it should be possible to work outside unmolested.

The three sailors appeared to have no doubt but that in case the dory was found by a searching party, a craft of some kind could be fashioned, and Joe's proposition that they make no other attempt than to reach Port Refuge, where he believed it would be possible to purchase a vessel, met with the approval of all.

"It ain't as if we hadn't a dollar," he said complacently. "If we find a vessel for sale, it's only a question of whether we want her or not, because Petro can supply us with as much good hard gold as we need. Once Bart Gerry an' the likes of him have been driven off or tired out, this 'ere will be no more than a picnic for us. We'll get a snug little craft, provision her in such fashion as sailormen never dreamed of, an' sail along toward home ac-

cordin' as the wind may blow, without any too much pullin' an' haulin'. There'll be no question of tryin' to make a fair wind out of a foul one, because we can heave-to whenever we feel inclined. I've often thought about goin' to sea in such fashion as that; but until I struck this racket, never believed it would be possible."

Thanks to the word-pictures painted by the sailor, all hands, including Winn, began to look upon their troubles as having already come to an end, and anticipated for the future months of unalloyed happiness and comfort.

Although believing themselves the only human beings on the island, it was proposed that "anchor watch" be kept, and by common consent Petro Garcia, as the oldest member of the party, was to be exempt from such duty.

At first he objected most strenuously to such division of the labor, insisting that, despite his age, he was fully capable of doing a full share of the work; but Joe, who considered himself second in command, refused to listen to his remonstrance.

"When the wind hauls 'round so that our precious friends can come back, you shall stand watch and watch with the rest of us; but until then I'll allow that we three—meaning Bartlett, Carleton and myself—can look out for things, an' never feel it."

"Don't you reckon me in?" Winn asked.

"The cook ain't called upon to stand watch, lad, an' that's the berth you're to occupy from this time out, unless it so be we find a better one at Keeling Island, when you can go into the cabin as a passenger."

For the first time since leaving Fairhaven, Winn began to think of the Aymara treasure as a reality in which he owned a share.

The confidence of the sailors that they would be able to purchase a vessel, and their speculations regarding the homeward voyage, which all appeared to consider a foregone conclusion, caused him to look upon the hoard as he never had done before, and while the others spent their time deciding this question or that concerning the future, he was trying to realize what his position would be when he returned to Fairhaven with more money than the richest man in town could call his own.

His waking dreams were exceedingly pleasant on that evening, and it seemed to him as if there was no longer anything to be feared from the unprincipled men who were willing to commit almost any crime in order to gain possession of the gold.

He quite forgot for the time being that a long and possibly bloody struggle must ensue before they could carry out the plan proposed by Joe.

That night he slept sweetly, visited by rose-colored dreams, and on being awakened next morning, set about the duties of cook as if the labor was a real pleasure.

As he worked the boy learned from the conversation of the men that the storm was at its height, and that the day would be spent in comparative idleness.

While they were at breakfast Petro told how they could add to the stores by gathering shell-fish and cocoanuts, and Dave Carleton proposed that as soon as the storm had abated sufficiently he and Joe would make a fishing voyage in the dory.

"Bartlett an' I brought ashore a couple of lines, thinkin' we might do something in the way of fishing if the 'Flying Scud' was blown very far off the coast, and accordin' to the appearance of things she ain't likely to be back for a spell. We've got salt enough among the stores the captain sent ashore to cure all we can catch, I reckon."

"I ought to be kicked for not thinkin' of your provisions last night," Joe said regretfully. "I reckon the salt won't be worth much after it has been out in this storm twelve hours."

"There's no danger of its spoiling, for I saw to it that it was well protected from the water by a spare sail Gerry sent ashore," Bartlett replied, "and if it so be you're willin,' we'll bring the grub in this

morning. It better be stored here than outside, an' a little wettin' won't do either of us any harm, my hearty."

After a leisurely-eaten breakfast was finished the three sailors set about bringing in the provisions lately sent ashore from the "Flying Scud," and when this had been done the quantity of stores in the cavern was most reassuring as the men thought of the siege which they must expect would be begun by their enemies.

Once during the day Winn ventured out for no other purpose than to prove to himself he could do so without danger; but the foliage was so laden with water, and the deluge from the heavens so great, that he gladly returned to the shelter of the cavern.

Not until the following morning were the clouds dispersed, and then all hands set about with a will to lay in additional stores, for none could say how much food might be needed before their enemies would allow themselves beaten.

Petro and Winn gathered cocoanuts and oysters. Bartlett undertook the labor of collecting fuel, while Joe Savage and Dave Carleton carried into execution the latter's plan of a fishing cruise on board the dory.

When night came all were weary from their labors; but it was a pleasant rather than a painful

fatigue, because of the success with which they had been rewarded.

Not less than two weeks' stock of fuel was stored nearby the spot that served as a fireplace. As large a quantity of shell-fish as could be eaten before it spoiled was within the shelter of the cavern, and just outside, where they could be exposed to the full rays of the sun, were a large number of fish prepared for drying.

"One more such day's work, and we'll have a three-months' supply," Joe said in a tone of satisfaction, and Petro added:

"We already have on hand what will serve until the wind forces the vessels to sea again. The question now which should be considered is how long before the schooner may be expected."

"It will be forty-eight hours at the least calculation, eh, mates?" and Joe looked questioningly at his comrades.

"Make it twice as long, an' you won't be far out of the way," Bartlett replied; but Dave Carleton was inclined to believe that within the time mentioned by Joe the "Flying Scud" would again be in the cove, providing the wind should be favorable.

On the following day the work was continued until they had made such an addition to the stores that it would be folly to collect more.

The fish were cured; the dory was brought into the cavern, which last was not a difficult task, now there were so many laborers, and on this second night the entire watch was stationed at the entrance of the cove, for the wind was blowing gently from the west, and no man could say how soon either the brig or the schooner would reappear.

On the third morning after the departure of the "Flying Scud" Petro and Winn stationed themselves at the western coast of the island, Bartlett was left on guard at the shore-end of the tunnel, while Joe Savage and Dave Carleton stood watch near the cove.

It was agreed that at the first sight of a sail he who discovered it should make his way at once to the thicket of thorns at the entrance of the cavern, and there shout to his comrades until all were warned.

It was nearly four o'clock in the afternoon when the first vessel was descried by Winn, and he and Petro had but just gained the rendezvous agreed upon, when Joe and Dave came up with the intelligence that they also had seen a sail bearing directly toward the island, but whether it was the brig or the schooner could not be determined.

"Both vessels are returning, and will arrive at an anchor about the same time," Petro said musingly.

"That is to say, by to-morrow morning we shall be besieged again."

"There's no need of our goin' into the cave before nightfall," Joe said carelessly, "for I allow the craft I saw won't be up until after midnight, and I don't count on housin' myself in when there's no call for it."

Winn noticed, however, that the men remained nearabout the entrance of the cavern, making frequent trips to the shore, as if desirous of being with their comrades even though all knew full well no danger threatened until after many hours had elapsed.

Each member of the party seemed to have a desire for companionship, born most likely from the knowledge of coming danger.

The night watch was set at both entrances of the cavern, and as great precaution taken against surprise as if the enemy had already landed.

Winn did not fall asleep as readily on this night as he had previously, but when slumber closed his eyelids the repose was undisturbed until Joe's voice awakened him.

That the morning had come he knew as he looked down through the passage which led to the sea, and he was therefore in a measure prepared for the information brought by the sailor.

"The 'Flying Scud's' crew are ashore huntin' for their mates," Joe announced. "For the last half hour I've heard 'em callin', an' perhaps it mightn't be a bad idea for Bartlett and Dave to tell 'em what's happened."

Now, for the first time, Petro made positive objection to a plan proposed by Joe Savage.

"There's no reason why we should aid in their search. Let them guess at what really did happen, as they will after a time, and it may be better for Captain Robinson and his mate to believe that we hold them unwilling prisoners."

Therefore it was that no parley was held with the searching party from the schooner.

Petro took it upon himself to guard the main passage of the cavern, nor would he be relieved until Winn announced that dinner was ready.

During all this time the occupants of the cavern had ample evidence that they were again besieged.

Twice a pistol-shot had been sent at random into the passage, and once Bart Gerry himself, while prudently keeping his body screened from view, shouted to Petro, evidently with the idea of continuing the bargain he had previously declared was concluded forever, so far as he was concerned.

No reply was made to his hail, however, but when one of the men from the outside incautiously ex-

posed himself, Petro gave token of being on watch by inflicting a flesh wound, as could be told from the scream of pain which followed the report of the revolver.

An hour after dinner had been eaten the besieged gained, without an effort on their part, much valuable information.

Joe Savage was on guard in the passage which opened upon the thicket of thorns, and Winn, his work having been finished, sat beside him.

From the mouth of the tunnel nothing save the foliage could be seen, but the sentries knew that something more than ordinary was taking place outside, because of a hurried tramping to and fro, exclamations of surprise now and then, and voices raised as if in anger.

"They must be fighting among themselves," Winn suggested. "At all events, that is what it sounds like."

"I reckon hot words are being thrown about careless like, but don't believe there's any row there," Joe replied. "I allow I've got a pretty good idea of what's up," and he crept a few inches nearer the mouth of the tunnel.

Winn stood close by his side, and in a few moments the two heard a man shout, half ironically:

"The captain of the brig wants to talk with the

skipper of the 'Flying Scud,' and I reckon you come pretty nigh being that, Mr. Gerry."

"There's one on Bartholomew," Joe whispered, as he made strenuous efforts to repress his mirth.

"Captain Robinson is on board, as you well know," Gerry replied; "but I am in command while we're ashore."

"The captain of the brig wants to see you," the first speaker added.

"He can come here, if that's the case, or else stay where he is. I shan't jump at his beck and call."

"Who may you be, sir?" the listener heard the stranger's voice ask of the man who had just announced his intentions.

"I'm the first mate of the schooner 'Flying Scud.'"

"I think I heard you say the captain was on board, but that you commanded while ashore."

"I did say so, whether you heard it or not," was the angry reply.

"If you are the first mate, perhaps my question can be answered as well by you as by the captain. I wish to know why you came to anchor off this island."

"Seein's we were here when you arrived, I reckon you'd better give your reasons for anchoring here."

"There's no good cause why I should."

"And there's no call for us to make any explanation," Gerry replied.

"I reckon, lad, they're likely to get up a first-class row between themselves, and if that captain is anywhere near as cross-grained as Bart Gerry, there will be fun outside before long."

Then followed a brief time of silence, which was broken by Gerry, who said offensively:

"I don't reckon you've got any more claim on this island than we have."

"I think you are mistaken," was the quiet reply; "and, owing to such belief, propose that you finish your business here within twenty-four hours and then weigh anchor."

"Oh, you do, eh?" Bart replied, with an angry sneer. "Perhaps you will be so good as to tell me what you propose to do in case we shouldn't be frightened by your bullyin'?"

"I shall take immediate steps toward enforcing my command."

If Bart Gerry had had a trifle more sense he would have understood that this man who spoke so quietly was more to be feared than a blusterer, and might possibly have answered less intemperately.

He lacked this grain of wisdom, however, and said, defiantly:

"You may find it a harder job than you count on,

to drive us away. I propose to hold on so long as pleases me, and now that you've opened the subject, I demand two things: First, that you explain your business here, and, secondly, that you prevent your men from following mine, as they've been doin' since mornin'."

"And if I refuse to comply with your demands, I presume you will use force."

"That I certainly shall, an' without much parley."

"You may begin whenever it seems best. My crew outnumbers yours by at least two to one, and I do not think there is a man among them who would be unwilling to join in a scrimmage. It is my intention to enter this place, which you seem to be guarding, and if force is to be employed, now is the proper time to make a show of it."

"Don't allow anything I've said to prevent you from goin' in there," Bart said, with mock politeness, and from the rustling of the foliage the listeners understood that he had moved a short distance from the entrance.

Joe had no desire to fire upon the master of the brig without a warning, neither did he intend to admit him, therefore he shouted:

"Have a care, captain! The first man who enters this passage will come mighty near dying! We are on guard here and prepared to shoot."

There was an interval of silence, during which Winn fancied he could picture to himself the surprise written upon the face of the brig's captain at thus suddenly discovering the cavern had an occupant.

"Who have you there?" the listeners heard the newcomer ask, and Bart replied, with a short laugh:

"You seem to be in a fair way of findin' out for yourself."

A moment of silence, and then the captain shouted:

"Ahoy there! who is waiting?"

"Them as counts on stayin' to keep others out," Joe replied. "For further information apply to Mr. Bart Gerry, who can tell you what success we've had so far in holding our own."

"Is that one of your men?" the sentinels heard the captain ask.

"He was; but he'll belong to nobody if I ever get my hands on him."

"It isn't difficult to fancy that your purpose here was known to your crew, and some of them have gotten the best of you."

"It won't take me a great while longer to show who has the best of it," Bart replied with a roar, and Joe, thoroughly enjoying the position of affairs, would have still further aided in the conversation but that Winn checked him.

"If you leave them alone, they may quarrel among themselves, and there's no reason why you should pitch into the captain of the brig until we know more about him."

"I reckon we know enough already, lad," Joe replied; and at that moment they were joined by Petro, who had heard the sound of voices and came through the passage to learn the cause.

"From the position of affairs, I fancy I can understand what you are trying to effect here," Winn heard the captain of the brig say. "It doesn't suit my purpose to have you remain, therefore I give you warning to return to your schooner at once. The man in the cave, whom I presume is a deserter, shall be put on board your vessel to-morrow morning, after which I expect you to weigh anchor."

It seemed to the listeners as if Gerry was in such a rage that words would not come freely at his command, for he stammered and shrieked several seconds at least before being able to make an intelligible reply.

"It is you and your crew who shall leave this island! There's no need of mincin' matters now. You've come, hopin' to find the treasure. We were here first, an' have a better claim upon it. What's more, there's no need to waste any time chinnin', for we've had all the warning needed, an' now it's my

turn to threaten. Call off your men an' leave this island within an hour."

"My men may be as ready for a scrimmage as yours, and we will see which crew can fight the best."

"How did you know that the Aymara treasure was buried here?"

"I might be willing to tell you for the sake of finding out how you learned about it, but won't go into explanations simply because you demand them. However, this much you may know: I came here with full authority from the owners of the hoard."

"You are a liar!"

CHAPTER XVII.

A BATTLE.

To those who were in the tunnel it seemed as if no more than a single second elapsed from the time Bartholomew Gerry incautiously applied to the captain of the brig such an epithet as every honest man must resent, before they heard what could have been none other than the sound of a blow, as the fist of one man came in sudden and forcible contact with the face or body of the other.

In an instant there was such a medley of shouts, cries of anger and trampling of feet that it was possible for the listeners to have a very good idea of what was being done.

"They're havin' a rough an' tumble fight!" Joe cried, gleefully. "Bart Gerry has been so long in the habit of callin' men liars, without havin' run across one who was willin' to take it up, that he must have been considerably surprised when the captain let out on him so sudden. 'Cordin' to what we can hear, I wouldn't wonder if the mate had started considerable of a row."

Unconsciously those in the tunnel moved nearer

and nearer the entrance in the effort to hear all that might be said, until they stood fully exposed to view, and not one of their enemies appeared to be aware of the fact.

Even Petro himself advanced several paces outside the entrance, and Winn remained close by his side.

The guardians of the Aymara treasure had good reason to feel the liveliest interest in the struggle which was going on before their eyes, for upon the result of it they would be able to form a very good idea of what might be expected to happen in the future.

There was no reason for believing that the captain of the brig would be any more generous an enemy than Bart Gerry had shown himself, and yet it is probable each of the spectators hoped the strangers would be victorious.

It was a battle, rather than a rough and tumble fight, as Joe had suggested.

The crew of the "Flying Scud," under the leadership of Bart Gerry, were drawn up in line with their backs against the mound or elevation which marked the entrance to the cavern, and facing them in something resembling soldier-like array, were the men from the brig.

Each of the schooner's crew had more than one

antagonist, owing to the disparity of numbers, and it was not difficult to foresee the result of the encounter.

Bart Gerry alone was evenly matched. The captain, whom he had insulted, was bent on punishing him unaided, and therefore it was that he presented a better appearance than did his men.

"If Bart was out of the way, I'd pitch in to help our crew, for it seems cowardly to remain idle when they are gettin' the worst of it," Joe Savage said in a tone of suppressed excitement. "As matters stand, our old mates must take their punishment because of the company they're in."

Winn had not removed his gaze from the combatants, yet he knew rather than saw that Dave Carleton had abandoned his post of duty in order to witness the encounter, but at the moment this act did not seem to him as anything for which the man should be censured.

If the treasure-seekers would fight among themselves, much trouble might be saved those who considered themselves the lawful guardians of the hidden wealth.

Less than ten minutes sufficed for the brig's captain to punish Bartholomew Gerry severely.

That mate's courage had oozed away after two or three heavy blows were delivered full upon his face,

and he who should have remained to animate his men was the first to seek safety in flight.

He started toward the shore as rapidly as his legs would carry him, and a few seconds later his crew followed.

One party of treasure-seekers was in full flight, closely pursued by the other, and the spectators believed the battle was ended; but before the fugitives were fully hidden by the foliage Captain Jim and one man appeared in view.

"He heard the rumpus, an' has come to lend a hand," Dave Carleton said, approvingly. "Now we shall see somethin' different in the way of fightin', for Jim Robinson ain't a man what'll cry baby, no matter how big odds are against him."

"If he'd come five minutes ago there might have been some show for the schooner's crew; but now it's too late," Joe muttered. "I'm glad that bloomin' mate got a heavy dose, but mighty sorry to see our mates downed so soon."

The presence of their captain served to give the crew of the "Flying Scud" renewed courage, and during ten minutes more they held the strangers at bay; but press of numbers soon told against them, and step by step Captain Jim was forced to give way.

"Be careful not to go too far from the cavern," Petro cried warningly as Joe Savage unconsciously

followed the combatants, and was in turn followed by his comrades.

There was little fear they would be in any danger from their enemies, for both parties were so deeply engaged with each other as to give no heed to anything else.

Even if the little group of spectators was observed, no evidence had been given of such fact, and while the schooner's crew was so hotly pressed they would not be able to work mischief on those whom they wished to capture.

Petro's warning was sufficient, however, to recall Joe Savage to a realization of what part he and his comrades were taking in the struggle, and he said sharply:

"Keep close together, boys. Although I don't think there's any chance those fellows will trouble us, we must be prepared, if we count on seein' the end of the scrimmage."

Winn remained close by Joe's side, and all four halted a hundred yards or more from the line of surf, where they had a good view of the finish.

The crew of the "Flying Scud" had long since ceased to act on the offensive, and had quite as much as they could do to defend themselves while pushing off in the boats.

At one time four sailors were standing knee-deep

in the water fighting bravely, but the end was not prolonged.

Captain Jim succeeded in taking all his men off, although every member of the crew had been punished more or less severely, while the representatives of the brig appeared fit to begin another battle without loss of time.

A loud shout of triumph went up from the victors as the last fugitive was taken aboard, and then half a dozen pistol-shots were fired by Captain Jim's party; but, so far as Winn could see, none of the bullets took effect.

"I don't understand why they didn't begin shooting before," he said to Joe.

"A fight with bare fists ain't any very serious matter, if the law looks into the business; but when men try to kill each other outright it's apt to make a deal of trouble, an' I reckon neither captain was willin' to take the chance. But we musn't hang 'round here any longer. The brig's crew are ripe for mischief, an' if they get a sight of us we may have more of this scrimmage than is good for us. Come on."

With a firm grip on Winn's hand, Joe turned and ran at full speed toward the entrance of the cavern, where Petro was awaiting them. He did not so much as give a single backward glance to ascertain if Bartlett and Carleton were following.

These two men showed that they were sincere in the promises made to the guardians of the treasure, for instead of attracting the attention of their former comrades, as might readily have been done, and thus effected their escape with but little difficulty, they followed close at Joe's heels.

Petro was standing near the clump of thorn bushes when his comrades returned, but he did not appear to think it necessary to inquire how the battle had ended.

"Have all the men left the island?" he asked, and Joe explained that the brig's crew yet remained.

"Then it is necessary we stand guard as before. Now that they have no one to interfere with them, the captain will attempt to learn the secret of this place. We have more to fear from him than from those who have been beaten."

"I'll go bail we shan't see one of the 'Flying Scud's' crew again till they've had a chance to repair damages," Joe replied with a cheery laugh.

"The mate will not remain idle, even though he has had the worst of the encounter," Petro replied, gravely. "If he can incite his men to the act, there will be bloody work before twenty-four hours have passed."

Joe shook his head as if to say he did not believe even Bart Gerry would dare to go to such lengths,

but Winn understood that Dave Carleton fully shared Petro's opinion.

"We've got the right to expect a hot time from now out, for this 'ere captain will do more in an hour than Bart Gerry could in a day. 'Cordin' to what I've seen of him, he don't spend much time yarnin', but pushes straight ahead, an' it stands to reason he's bound to know why we're holdin' the fort in here."

Bartlett expressed the opinion that there was nothing more to be feared from those on board the "Flying Scud," at least, until the brig had left the cove, and in this Joe agreed with him.

Even though all were not of the same mind regarding what might be done by their enemies, every member of the party believed that the utmost vigilance was necessary, and in a few moments after returning from the battle-field the guardians of the treasure were in a position to protect themselves and their rights.

Joe involuntarily went to the seaward end of the tunnel to stand guard; Petro remained at the opposite entrance, while Winn set about preparing supper, for night was near at hand.

"It stands us in hand to keep mighty sharp watch every hour of the twenty-four," Dave Carleton said, as he lazily threw himself down on the sand where he could observe the movements of the cook, "an' it

ain't goin' to be pleasant work, for it's a case of expectin' a pistol-shot at any minute."

Bartlett nodded his head gravely as he replied:

"At the same time I allow we're better off here than we would be on board the schooner. The mate must be mighty lively by this time."

"He's like a bear with a sore head, an' all hands will be kept jumpin', unless he's used up so bad that he can't come on deck."

"I don't reckon he stayed long enough for that. When the brig's captain got in three or four good clips, his spirit was broken, an' from that minute he only figgered how he could best get out of the scrape. I'll warrant he's in better shape than any other man aboard."

"Right you are, my hearty, an'——"

The conversation was interrupted at this point, as from the mouth of the tunnel, where Petro was stationed, could be heard the hail:

"Ahoy inside!"

The old man hesitated to reply, and the hail was repeated.

Winn, Bartlett and Dave were half-way up the tunnel when the sentinel finally cried:

"Ahoy! What's wanted?"

"I've come to find out why you're skulking in there. If it so be you're hidin' from the officers of

the schooner, you'll have a free foot now, for I'm of the opinion they won't venture ashore very soon again."

"We came in here to protect ourselves from them, but yet are not of the mind to trust ourselves with you."

"Why are you afraid?"

"I did not say we were. It is our desire to be left to ourselves; therefore we do not give provocation to any man, but ask, as is right, that we be left alone."

"Do you know anything about the treasure which is buried here?"

"We have heard what our captain believed he knew."

"Did he find anything?"

"Not to our knowledge."

"He has done considerable digging."

"But found nothing."

"Why did you leave him?"

Petro hesitated, and understanding that the old man was unwilling to tell an absolute falsehood, Dave took up the conversation.

"We deserted because we hadn't shipped for sich a voyage as this turned out to be, an' didn't allow to hang 'round here while he searched over every foot of the island, as the mate said would be done."

"Yet you are not so well off here as you would be

on the schooner, and will be forced to remain as long as your vessel does."

"We don't have to use the pick and shovel all the blessed day."

"What objection have you to my coming inside?"

Dave was at a loss for the wisest reply, and Petro again acted as spokesman:

"So long as you are outside and we inside, there is no great danger of our being worsted. We choose to hold the advantage."

This seemed to puzzle the captain, for the listeners heard him mutter as if to a companion:

"That fellow is a regular sea-lawyer, and most likely has put his mates up to deserting."

"We should be the last to grumble because of what he has done, for the fight might have had a different ending if the schooner's crew had been larger."

"I'm not grumbling, but don't intend these fellows shall keep me at arm's length in this fashion. If they had deserted from their vessel simply because of a desire to shirk work, they would not hesitate to let us in. There is something here that we ought to know."

Then those on the outside spoke in a tone so low that the remainder of the conversation could not be overheard by the little party in the tunnel, and five

minutes elapsed before the captain had anything more to say to the deserters.

"Look here, my men," he began, "I don't make any claim to command you, nor will I waste time by explaining that you're liable to arrest in case you should fall in with the officers of the schooner in a foreign port. My business is much the same as your captain's, with this exception: I've got legal authority to take away the treasure, and he hasn't. I am come on a peaceful voyage, although ready to fight for my rights rather than not have them to the letter. I have no desire to work you harm, but must see what you have in there. Allow me to enter alone, and if there is nothing inside but your provisions or luggage, I'll go away at once, promising never to molest you in the possession of the place."

Winn expected Petro would agree to this proposition without hesitation.

So far as outward appearances went there was nothing in the cave other than what men in their professed situation would naturally gather, and it seemed to the boy that they would be the gainers by granting the captain's request.

There appeared to be, so he argued in his mind, little possibility the visitor would suspect treasure was hidden in the cavern, for there were no signs betokening that the sand which formed the floor had

ever been disturbed, therefore no harm could come from an inspection.

Carleton and Bartlett, who were ignorant that the wealth of the Aymaras was beneath their feet, also expected to hear the desired permission given, and the surprise of all three was great when Petro replied emphatically:

"Men do not give an enemy the opportunity to examine a stronghold, and for that very reason we refuse."

"But I am not an enemy. On the contrary, I will defend you against your own captain, if you have just and sufficient cause for desertion."

"There is no reason why the case should be submitted to you. We are able to hold our position here, and intend to do it."

"Look here, my man," and from the tone of his voice it was evident that the captain was losing his temper; "I have asked no more than is my right, and by a refusal you cause me to suspect that matters with you are not as you would have me believe."

"The commander of the schooner is the only one who has even the semblance of authority to question our acts, and we even go so far as to claim that he shall not interfere with us; therefore it is hardly reasonable to suppose we will put our faith in strangers."

"Since you refuse to show that you have no part of the treasure I have been sent here to reclaim, I intend to make the visit by force, and if any one is used roughly, the fault will be on your heads. Come in there I shall, even though I spend a month in doing so."

Petro did not reply to this outburst, and after a brief pause the captain of the brig added:

"You have fair warning of my intentions, and this is the last parley I will hold with such mutinous scoundrels. The next time I shall force my way inside."

"Remember that we are ready to shoot down the first who shows himself at the entrance, after which nothing more need be said."

The rustling of the foliage told that the captain had moved away, and Dave Carleton said decidedly:

"I reckon he means what he says, an' it stands us in hand to keep both eyes open. There's a good bit of difference 'twixt him an' our bloomin' mate."

"It will be more difficult to keep him out than it was to prevent the mate's crew from entering. Winn, you had better tell Joe Savage what has taken place. If he heard the voices he'll be eager to learn what has been said and by whom."

Winn started at once to obey this suggestion, which was little less than a command, and Dave

Carleton accompanied him, saying as they walked through the tunnel:

"Joe may want to have a chin with Petro, an' I'd best go with you to take his place."

The sailor had been made decidedly anxious because of the loud conversation, which he could hear only as a distant hum, and when Winn repeated to the best of his ability all that had been said, he asked in perplexity:

"Why didn't Petro let the captain look at the cave, if that was all he wanted?"

"That's what puzzles me," Dave replied. "It seemed as if it would be the easiest way out, for there's no reason why the crew of the brig should interfere with us—at least, they don't know of any."

"The old man is mighty careful, an' perhaps what he's done is for the best, so we won't grumble over it," Joe said, after some reflection. "We know to a ty-ty that Petro means square by us, an' his head is longer than all of ours put together."

Dave would have dismissed the question but that Joe asked him to stand guard at that end of the tunnel, and motioned for Winn to follow him.

"I reckon Petro didn't dare to let that skipper into the cave for fear he'd suspect where the gold was buried," the sailor said when he and the boy were so

far up the passage that there was no chance Dave could overhear the conversation.

"It isn't likely he'd think it any more than Captain Jim did."

"There's no tellin' what might happen if a keen-eyed man was to look around our hiding-place. He'd say to himself, says he, 'What's these 'ere bloomin' sailors doin' underground when they can go outside, where it's pleasant?' An' then he might come precious nigh to guessin' the truth. But even if there wasn't any fear of that, I'd say Petro was right."

"Why?"

"Because so far he always has been, an' a man with the nerve to do what he did in order to get on this 'ere island, can't go very far wrong whatever he may do."

When the two arrived at the tunnel leading from the landward side of the cave they found Petro on the alert, weapon in hand, listening for the slightest sound which should tell of the enemy's coming.

By his side crouched Bartlett in much the same attitude, and Joe asked in a whisper:

"What's up? You two look as if you'd good reason for expectin' trouble in mighty quick time."

Instead of replying, Petro motioned for the newcomers to remain silent, and during five minutes or

more Winn listened more intently than perhaps he had ever done before; all that time not so much as the rustling of a leaf could be heard.

Joe began to speak again, but Bartlett checked him with an angry gesture, and at the same instant Winn heard that which caused the blood to bound in his veins.

It was a sharp clicking noise as if metal had fallen upon rock, and he understood that the enemy were creeping upon them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ATTACK.

WINN'S comrades also heard the ominous sound which had attracted his attention, and therefore were in a certain degree prepared for what followed.

It was the method of attack which took them by surprise.

"They are gettin' ready to make a rush, an' count on bein' able to shoot us down at the first volley," Joe whispered to Petro, and the latter nodded his head in token that he was of the same opinion.

An instant later he crouched upon his knees, motioning for the others to follow his example, and with every weapon in readiness the little party awaited the assault.

It came, but not in the same fashion as had been anticipated.

Suddenly, and while the enemy yet remained hidden from view, a volley of reports rang out, and bullets struck both sides of the tunnel at the same moment.

Those on the outside had divided into two parties, one of which discharged their weapons from the

Petro crouched upon his knees, and with every weapon in readiness the little party awaited the assault.—Page 282.
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right and the other from the left, in such a manner that there was a cross-fire from the very edge of the tunnel on either side to a distance of fifteen or sixteen feet into the passage.

Owing to the fact that the defenders of the cavern were upon their knees, none of the bullets took effect, and the old man said in a low tone as soon as the echoes had died away sufficiently for his voice to be heard:

"The next time that game is tried I believe they will attempt to rush in under cover of the smoke. We'll draw back a dozen paces, out of range of the bullets, and there remain standing ready to resist the assault which I am convinced must soon come. Winn, go and tell Carleton he is to remain at his post at all hazards, and if the enemy shows himself there, let him discharge two chambers of his revolver as a signal."

The boy obeyed as quickly as possible, and found the sailor half way up the tunnel, instead of at the entrance where he should have been.

Winn repeated Petro's words, and Dave said in a tone of irritation:

"There's little fear they will find this entrance, an' I can be of more service there than here."

"Petro seems to believe different, and it would be folly for us to leave this end unguarded. If the

enemy should discover it, and no sentinel remained here, we'd soon be worsted."

"You take my place an' let me go where there is a chance something will be done," Dave Carleton said, eagerly.

Winn hesitated, and the sailor was on the point of running forward, when the boy said quickly:

"We are a pretty poor lot if we can't obey orders, an' your post is here. I'll tell Petro what you say, an', if he's willing, come back to relieve you."

Then, as if fearing Dave might persist in doing as he desired, Winn ran rapidly back, arriving at the landward side of the cavern just as a second volley was fired from the outside.

Now it was shown that Petro's supposition regarding the methods to be employed by the enemy was correct, for in an instant after the reports rang out the mouth of the tunnel appeared to be literally choked by a body of men, and a dozen bullets or more came hurtling straight through the passage.

Winn stood where he could not discharge his weapon without fear of hitting his comrades, and he was the only one whose revolver was not emptied into that oncoming mass.

Several sharp cries of pain were heard. The discharge of the weapons continued until it became a regular fusilade, and the only wonder was that every

man within that narrow passage had not been wounded or killed.

The enemy were checked, however, thanks to the spirited resistance, and before the smoke cleared away sufficiently for the besieged to have a full view of the tunnel, not one of the brig's crew could be seen.

"Has anybody been hurt?" Joe Savage asked anxiously when it was known that the enemy no longer opposed them.

"I'm all right," Bartlett replied, as if surprised that such was the case.

"I was so far back that some of you must have stopped the bullets before they could reach me," Winn added.

Petro remained silent, and going up to him quickly, Joe asked:

"Are you hurt, old man?"

"Nothing to speak of. A bullet grazed my rib, I believe."

"Come back here an' let me see what has been done."

"It is nothing," Petro replied, carelessly, and Winn noted with alarm the fact that he pressed his hand closely against his side.

"It's bad enough to start the blood flowing in quite a stream," Joe said sharply as he literally

forced the old man back into the cavern and with Winn's aid began pulling away the clothing from the wound.

Petro protested that it was "only a scratch," until the wound had been exposed to view, and then it was seen that the bullet had penetrated his side—still remained there.

"This seems like to be dangerous," Joe said with an air of solicitude as he gently pressed the flesh here and there to ascertain the location of the ball.

"It will amount to nothing," Petro insisted, "and while you waste your time on me the enemy may make another rush. Get back into the passage; I will attend to myself."

"I reckon they've got a dose that'll keep 'em quiet for a spell," Joe replied indifferently, "an' I don't count on leavin' you till I know more about this 'ere wound. Winn, stand alongside Bartlett an' keep your eyes open. I can get back there in time to be of service after the first shot is fired."

Petro made no further remonstrance, probably because he realized how useless it would be, but submitted patiently to Joe's rude attempts at surgery.

Winn joined Bartlett, and the two stood half way between the cavern and the outer entrance to the tunnel, with revolvers in hand, prepared for and expecting a third attack.

"Has the old man got much of a hurt?" the sailor asked, and Winn replied in tremulous tones:

"Joe is trying to find out. It would be terrible if anything should happen to Petro."

"When we started in on this kind of business a man took his chances of something such as has come to him, but it would be mighty tough if either of us four should be knocked out of time just now when we're like to have our hands full of fightin'."

Bartlett's words did not tend to make Winn feel any more comfortable in mind. The sailor spoke much as if he anticipated the worst, and for the time it was to the boy as if this old friend of Manuel Telceda's had received his death-wound.

Then, much to the relief of both sentinels, Petro walked slowly into the passage, as though returning to duty, and Winn breathed more freely when he noted the fact that the old man advanced unaided.

"Are you feelin' better?" he asked, eagerly.

"I shall be better soon," was the evasive reply. "The wound was more painful than dangerous, I fancy; but Joe Savage is a good surgeon. Have you heard anything from the outside?"

"Not so much as a whisper," Bartlett replied. "I reckon they got a full dose that time."

"It isn't safe to believe so. I can't think the captain of the brig will be disheartened by one failure."

"I reckon not; but he's got what'll last him for a spell, anyhow, an' unless I'm way out of my reckonin', you won't be called upon to do anything more'n stand watch until to-morrow. Then some new game will be tried."

It surely seemed as if Bartlett was correct in this supposition.

Night was rapidly approaching.

The captain of the brig had been tempted to make the assault only because of his suspicions regarding the actions of the men—not from any positive opinion that the treasure was hidden in the cave, and it seemed probable he would think twice before repeating the attempt.

The first attack had unquestionably resulted in the disabling of several of his crew, and he could not well afford to weaken the force further while the "Flying Scud" was in the cove, for Captain Jim would not be slow to take advantage of his opportunity should the brig's crew be so reduced in numbers as to make the odds more nearly equal.

During half an hour or more Petro, Bartlett and Winn remained on guard at this entrance to the tunnel without hearing or seeing anything to cause alarm.

Joe had gone to visit Dave Carleton immediately after dressing the old man's wounds, and was not yet

returned when night shrouded the entrance to the cavern in darkness.

Now Winn was reminded that his duties as cook yet remained to be performed, and after acquainting Garcia with his intentions, he set about the work of preparing supper.

While thus engaged, Joe Savage came into the cavern and asked sharply as he approached the boy:

"Is Petro on guard?"

"He's in the tunnel with Bartlett."

"Has he complained of his wound?"

"I notice that he holds his hand over it. Do you think it severe?"

Joe evidently wished to avoid the subject, for instead of replying, he asked how soon the meal would be ready; but Winn pressed him for an answer until he finally said solemnly:

"I believe, lad, that the old man has got what he won't recover from."

"Do you mean that there is danger of his dying?" Winn asked in alarm.

"Now don't get excited, lad. It would have been better, perhaps, for me not to have said anything; but if I'd held my tongue you might have believed the case to be worse than it really is. I'm not sayin' I think he's like to die right away, but yet it wouldn't surprise me if death should come at any minute. I

couldn't find the bullet, an' so long as it is inside of him there's danger. Howsomever, we won't cross the bridge till we come to it."

"But suppose Petro should die while we are so hard pressed," Winn persisted in a tearful tone.

"It would weaken our force fully one-half, for that old man has got a mighty long head on his shoulders; but even then we shouldn't be beaten, because it's only a question of time when both the brig and the schooner have got to put to sea without the treasure."

"They might find it by gaining possession of this cave."

"I don't allow they'll do that this year, at all events. See here, my lad, if you go to borrowin' trouble, things will appear mighty hard. It's only by lookin' on the bright side that we can better our condition. Trouble ain't warded off by worryin'. On the contrary, it's made to seem a good deal bigger. So keep up a stout heart, an' you'll live to think of this 'ere time as something that wasn't so very serious after all."

"That day can never come," Winn replied, gravely. "No one could be in a more dangerous situation than we are."

"That's where you are makin' a mistake, my lad, as you'll live to find out." And as the best method

of putting an end to this unprofitable conversation, Joe left the cavern to visit the sentinels in the tunnel.

When the cook announced that supper was ready Petro and Bartlett came into the cavern, the former immediately lying down near the fire and pretending to eat; but Winn noticed that he took up fragments of the food only now and then, masticated it slowly, as if it was distasteful to him, and appeared to have great difficulty in swallowing even the smallest morsel.

The sentinels were served with supper at their posts of duty, and then, at Joe Savage's suggestion, the boy was put on guard in the eastward tunnel, in order that the men might gain some rest before danger was to be apprehended, for the general impression of all seemed to be that between midnight and sunrise would prove the most perilous time.

It was a lonely vigil which Winn kept during the four hours, and made particularly so by the sorrowful thoughts which would persist in forcing themselves upon his mind.

The night air was so sultry as to be oppressive, and more than once did the boy feel forced to lean forward outside the entrance in order to breathe freely.

There was a strange color in the sky; although the moon was obscured, it seemed as if the clouds

gave off a certain dull glow, while a moaning was heard in the air, even when one could not feel any wind.

At about eleven o'clock Joe Savage came to relieve Winn, and the boy's first question was concerning Petro.

"He's been sleeping for two hours or more, and I allow so long as he can get rest it's the best thing for him, so we're shiftin' watches as quietly as possible. Hello, what's going on?" and Joe stepped nearer the entrance as he gazed alternately at the sky and the inky waters.

"It's the hottest night I ever knew."

"There's something more than heat here." And the old sailor sniffed as he perceived a distinct odor in the hot air. "I reckon, lad, it's a case of both vessels getting under way this night."

"What do you mean, Joe?"

"If I was the skipper of a craft, at anchor off Cocos Island in the Indian Ocean, I'd say to myself there was a typhoon breaking, and would take precious good care I had plenty of water under my keel."

"But you once told me such storms came up slowly."

"We've got no means of saying how long this has been going on, lad, for since morning we've had

other things to take up our attention. It may be I'm wrong, but I wouldn't be afraid to bet a full half of all I'll get out of the Aymara treasure that there'll be such a breeze spring up 'twixt now an' daylight as you never saw before."

"I only hope you are right," Winn replied with a long-drawn sigh as there came to his mind the thought that if they could be left alone just now it might be possible to minister to Petro's wounds with better effect than while they were forced to remain constantly on the alert against an attack.

"Hold on a minute, and let me see what Dave thinks of this 'ere glow. He's a pretty good hand at tellin' the weather, an' I'd trust him before I would half of them barometers what jump up an' down without sayin' it's a change for better or worse."

Joe walked softly through the tunnel, lest he should disturb Petro's slumbers, and a few moments later returned with Carleton.

"Look out there, Dave, an' tell me what you think of things generally."

The sailor did as he was bidden, and during five minutes or more remained silent, while he turned this way and that, sniffing audibly in every direction.

"Well, what have you got to say?" Joe asked impatiently as his comrade delayed speaking.

"This 'ere is about the size of it, my hearty, accordin' to the way I figger it out from that sky and the whine of the water: If all hands belongin' to the brig ain't aboard of her before sunrise, they'll stand a precious good chance of being left behind, because she's going to get under way mighty soon, if her skipper is half the man I take him to be."

"Typhoon, eh?"

"That's what I make out of it. See here, Joe, suppose me an' the boy take a look around? With you an' Bartlett to stand guard, I reckon we can get from here to the cove 'long shore without much risk, and it'll be a precious good thing for us to know whether any of 'em who made it hot for us a spell ago are left behind."

Joe Savage remained as if in deep thought for an instant and then said decidedly:

"It won't do anyhow, Dave. If Petro was the man we knew him to be this morning, I'd say it would be a good thing if he took a look around; but for you and Winn, who don't know the place, to try anything of the kind, it ain't safe. Besides, if all we've allowed comes to pass, we'll be needed in this 'ere cave before you could go an' get back."

"I tell you there'll be no more fightin' to-night, Joe Savage. The captain of the brig isn't a fool, an' knows by this time that he can't afford to lay 'round

Cocos Island much longer. Even if the weather wasn't quite so threatenin', he'd likely up anchor because it ain't a case of givin' him the slip while he's gone. We're bound to be here, an' he ain't takin' any chances of losin' the treasure by puttin' to sea."

"I don't believe you'd better go, Dave, and for more reasons than one. Petro is in such shape that he's likely to be took bad any minute, and with only two of us here we couldn't 'tend to him unless by leavin' one of the tunnels unguarded, which, you must agree, wouldn't be safe."

"Then Winn an' me will turn in," Carleton replied with a gesture of impatience, and taking the boy by the arm, he went swiftly into the cavern, where could be seen by the faint light of the fire, Petro Garcia reclining as if in profound repose.

It seemed to Winn, when he was aroused suddenly by a heavy, booming noise, as if he had been asleep several hours, and he started up in alarm, hearing nothing of his companions, but with the reverberations as of distant cannonading ringing in his ears.

The fire had died away until only a few smouldering embers remained.

The darkness was profound.

Feeling his way toward the tiny sparks which betokened the location of the fireplace, he kindled so

much of a blaze as permitted him to distinguish objects in the cavern.

Petro remained as if asleep, in almost exactly the same position as when the boy saw him before, but the other members of the party were absent.

A gust of wind suddenly filled the cavern, sending the embers in every direction, and the noise which had aroused Winn increased until he believed it was caused by thunder.

Remembering what Joe and Dave had predicted, he ran to the tunnel which led toward the shore, buffeted by the wind which swept along the narrow passage with such force that advance was absolutely difficult, and after really severe effort he came upon Bart and Joe.

"Is there a storm?" he asked, and Joe replied grimly:

"Aye, lad, such a one as I venture to say you've never seen. Dave wasn't far wrong when he allowed a typhoon was close at hand; but both of us were mistaken in reckoning that the captain of the brig had sense enough to leave port early in the evening."

"Can you see the vessel?" Winn asked in surprise.

"Aye, lad, now and then. Look yonder, and when the spray falls you'll see the craft tryin' to crawl off a lee-shore. God grant she'll do so, even

though them on board are willin' to shoot us down; but the chances are against her."

Winn went forward to the very entrance. He had joined his companions within a dozen feet or more of the outer end, and had hardly gained this point of vantage when suddenly there came a crash as of thunder, and he was dashed violently backward by a volume of water.

The two sailors assisted him to his feet, and Joe said in a voice which sounded very much as if choked by laughter:

"I didn't think to warn you, lad, that the sea is breaking in on us, for I allowed you'd know that much. Howsomever, it's only a wettin' you've got, and on a night like this it don't count."

"How can it be possible for the waves to come so high?" Winn asked in surprise. "The level of the sea is twenty feet below this cavern."

"Aye, lad, and the surf is pilin' up twice that height. There's no need of keepin' guard here until after daybreak; but I'm bound to hold on till that 'ere craft crawls away from the shore."

Standing so near the outer edge that at times he was knee-deep in the water, Winn strained his eyes to make out the shape of the brig, and finally saw what he believed to be her—a huge dark mass which was obscured every few seconds by the spray flung

up from the rocks, and so near the shore that it seemed certain she would beat upon it the next instant.

"If that's the brig, here comes the schooner!" Carleton cried as he stepped quickly to Winn's side, and the boy saw another dark spot rising and falling violently, at times thrown up in bold relief against the almost luminous sky and again swallowed by the inky blackness of the waters.

"Both skippers were mad to have held on so long," Joe muttered, and Dave added:

"I reckon they allowed there wouldn't be any great weight to the wind, an' the island might act as a breakwater. The odds are that this 'ere smother sprang up in the west, an' has circled 'round before these treasure-mad captains had an idea of what was before 'em."

"Will they work off shore, think you?" Joe asked anxiously, and Carleton replied sharply:

"The odds are mightily agin 'em. God help the craft that comes ashore on this graveyard of a reef."

CHAPTER XIX.

PETRO'S DEATH.

THE sailors and Winn remained as near the entrance of the tunnel as was safe while the waves beat upon that portion of the coast with such fury, all three fascinated by the momentary glimpses they had of the laboring vessels.

It might have been an hour, or only a few moments, so little heed did they give to the passage of time with that wild scene before them, when Winn fancied he heard a strange noise from the cavern.

It was not possible to distinguish any sounds above the roar of the tempest, save during those brief lulls when it seemed as if all nature had paused in its violent work to gain strength for a fresh outburst; but his quick ear had caught the feeble cry, and he said in alarm:

"I believe Petro is trying to call us!"

"Go in and see, lad. If we're needed, sing out, an' we'll be there in a shake," Joe replied, pushing the boy toward the chamber, but not so much as turning his head because of the spell which held him as if in fetters.

Winn had no more than time to traverse the short distance twice before he was confronting his comrades again, saying hurriedly:

"I believe Petro is dying! He didn't speak to me, but groaned terribly, and his face is white."

Instantly Joe and Dave were running through the passage at full speed, and on gaining the wounded man's side understood that Winn had not given a false alarm.

The old man was stretched out at full length, one hand gripping hard over the wound, while with the other he convulsively dug the sand away as if trying to come at something beneath the surface.

His eyes were open and staring, and a crimsoned froth oozed from his lips.

"Bring water! Quick!" Joe cried as he raised the sufferer's head gently, stroking his brow as he would have soothed a child.

Winn was the one who obeyed the sailor's command, and he tried in vain to induce the old man to drink; but it was as if the spirit had already left its earthly shell.

Joe, forcing the almost rigid jaws apart, poured a small quantity of the liquid down Petro's throat, and a few seconds later the anxious watchers were relieved by seeing the sufferer's eyes move, as a faint tinge of blood crept into his cheeks.

"It was lucky you heard him just as you did," Joe said in a whisper. "If he'd been left alone five minutes longer, I reckon the end would have come."

"Are you feeling better?" Winn asked in a tremulous voice, and the old man replied by a faint movement of the head.

"Heat some of that 'ere canned soup," Dave Carleton said sharply, his sorrow giving him a semblance of anger. "He didn't eat at supper time as much as would be needed by a full-grown sparrow, an' a little nourishment now is better than too much water."

Winn looked toward Joe as if asking his opinion, and the latter replied to the mute question:

"It can do no harm, at all events, an' may pull him together a bit."

As soon as might be the boy did as he was bidden, and Petro swallowed several mouthfuls as if the warm liquid gave him relief.

Then, after motioning for Joe to raise him higher, he asked in a voice so faint that it was hardly more than a whisper:

"Is a tempest raging?"

"Aye, Petro, a typhoon, an' both vessels are makin' a lee-shore of the island, with but little chance of bein' able to clear the reefs."

"God grant them safe delivery," the old man whis-

pered as he closed his eyes, and after that no word was spoken for several moments, when Petro asked feebly:

"Are you all here?"

"Bartlett is on guard in the landward tunnel; but there's little need for watchin' this night," Joe replied.

"Let the man be called."

Winn went hurriedly to summon Bartlett, returning with all speed after this had been done.

"All hands are here now," Joe said as he motioned the sailor to draw near. "Did you want to say something, Petro?"

"You believe I am dying, do you not?"

Joe stammered, not wishing to answer the question directly, and the old man said, speaking in a louder tone, as if eager that all should hear:

"You need not hesitate to say it. I know that but few moments remain to me in this world, and before I go there is a last favor you can grant me."

"Don't use up too much strength talkin', but hint at what you mean, an' it'll be the same as if you'd made a long yarn of it."

"You know where the Aymara treasure is buried?"

Joe nodded.

"You know the boy is Manuel Telceda's heir, and

that Manuel left with him fullest instructions as to what should be done with the gold, if the good God permits it to be taken away from here by those who respect the rights of my people?"

"Hold on a bit, an' see if I can't do some of this talkin', for you're too weak to keep this thing up very long," Joe interrupted. "You want us to agree that we'll carry out the orders written down by old Manuel?"

"Yes, and to do so you must find my people."

"It shall be done," the sailor said promptly. "I know where Manuel found those he talked with when the 'Flying Scud' came to anchor off the Venezuelan coast, an' that's the first port we'll make after leavin' here."

"Buy a vessel as you proposed. Work her yourselves, or, at the most, do not hire more than one man, lest the gold prove such a temptation that more crime be committed. If you find my people, divide the wealth among them as Manuel has directed, keeping for yourselves as much as he set down should be paid to all those who assisted in the removal."

"You want us to follow the orders he gave Winn in writin'?" Joe interrupted when the old man's voice failed him.

"Yes, and you will consult your own judgment as

to how you can best take the treasure from this island."

"We promise, Petro, an' there ain't one of us as will go back on the agreement."

"Let each in turn say 'I swear to carry out to the best of my ability the written instructions set down by Manuel Telceda and given to Winslow Burbridge for safe keeping.' "

"Joe was the first to repeat the words, holding up his right hand as if to show he considered the formality a lawful oath, and in turn the others followed his example.

Petro appeared satisfied with these pledges, and motioning Winn to come nearer, he said as the boy clasped his cold hand:

"You shall take for yourself, lad, a full portion, and also the one Manuel would have held, as your own. That which was to be given the captain and mate of the 'Flying Scud' you will divide among your three companions, except that from it shall be paid to the officers of the schooner such an amount as represents their outlay in making the voyage. I leave to you the direction of the affair, as did my friend Manuel, and may the Aymara treasure bring to you and yours such happiness as was denied its rightful owners."

Then Petro covered his face with the coat Joe had

thrown over him, and his companions believed he wished to shield his eyes from the dancing fire-light which swayed hither and yon under the strong wind which swept through the tunnels.

With his head resting upon a plllow formed by filling with leaves the bag in which Winn had brought his store of provisions from the "Flying Scud," the old man's comrades left him, in the hope he might sleep, and all went through the seaward tunnel to learn if the brig and schooner were yet struggling within sight of the island.

Standing at the entrance of the passage, gripping each other tightly, lest one or more should be swept away by the raging waters which leaped up into the tunnel as if eager to find a victim, the guardians of the treasure searched with their eyes the pall of blackness that hung above the waters.

The peculiar luminous hue had disappeared from the heavens, and the clouds but served to add to the gloom of night.

Only here and there, where the foam of the sea gave forth a certain ghastly whiteness, could anything be discerned among the howling, roaring, seething mass which seemed to fill the air.

"They may have crawled off while we were talking with Petro," Joe said, after making certain it was impossible to distinguish objects even close at

hand. "It didn't look as if there was any very good show of doing that when I last saw 'em."

"There's no hope for either craft or crew that strikes the shore this night," Dave said solemnly, and Winn was seized with a nervous trembling he could not repress as he thought of the possible fate which had overtaken those who were so lately eager to shed blood.

The scene with Petro had completely unnerved him, and the howling of the tempest caused a paroxysm of fear such as he had never known before.

"Come away, lad," Joe said, soothingly, as he led the boy into the cavern. "It will do you no good to listen to the devil's music that comes with the gale."

"I must be a terrible coward if I can't stand the noise of a storm," Winn replied in a hysterical tone.

"I'm not so certain of it, lad, for in my time I've seen old sailormen, reg'lar shell-backs, who have turned pale in spite of the browning laid on their faces by the weather, when they were in the centre of a typhoon, an' that's about where we are this minute."

"Do you think either vessel weathered the point?"

"There's about one chance in a hundred both are afloat now; but that's all."

"Don't you think any of the men could save them-

selves?" and Winn was seized with an inward shuddering that literally caused his teeth to chatter.

"No living thing—not even a fish—could come through that surf onto the jagged rocks an' live so long as a single minute. The sailor whose craft strikes Cocos Island this night could not be saved even though fifty men stood ready to lend a hand, for he'd be beaten to death by the waves before you could say 'Jack Robinson.' "

By this time the two were in the cavern and saw Petro as they had left him.

"The old man is still asleep, an' it's the best medicine he can have," Joe whispered, and Winn stepped softly to the invalid's side in order to replace the coat which had slipped a few inches from his face.

As he stooped he uttered a shrill cry of mingled pain and fear, for in the glassy, staring eyeball and the drooping jaw he recognized the presence of death.

Joe Savage understood the situation without need of a glance, and at once gathered the boy in his arms, carrying him through the tunnel which opened landward, while he said, much as if speaking to a child:

"You're needin' a stiff upper lip now, lad, and knowing that the old man has slipped his cable without so much as a struggle should help you to it. We

had reason to believe he couldn't live many hours, when he last spoke to us, an' there's big cause for thankfulness because he's been spared sufferin'."

There was death in the air that night; its chill shadow seemed everywhere around, and Winn Burbridge was not the only one of that little party who felt its presence.

When Dave and Bartlett learned the saddening news, they gathered in the cavern with Joe and Winn, after the lifeless body, covered with such a shroud as they could give it, had been laid reverentially near the wall on the side opposite the fireplace, and during the remainder of that long, dismal night no member of the little party either spoke or slept.

If they raised their eyes but slightly it seemed impossible to shut out from view the ominous-looking form, and with every new gust of wind each heard the requiem of those who had been drowned while their hands were yet stained with the blood of their fellows.

It was a most blessed relief to all when the pale light of the new day crept through the eastern passage, flecking the white sand with tiny patches of sunshine and betokening life and peace.

"Come outside, lad; we'll have a look at the cove," Joe said abruptly, and as the boy arose to his feet the sailor whispered to Dave and Bartlett.

Without giving particular heed to the fact, Winn noted that these two remained in the cavern after he and Joe left it, and for a moment he wondered when they intended to follow.

Then his attention was attracted by the ravages of the tempest.

On every hand could be seen the work of the wind. Huge palms were shattered or uprooted. Branches of trees, sea-weed and bits of wreckage had been strewn in every direction.

Joe first led the way to the excavation from which Petro had taken, at the expense of such a vast amount of labor, the Aymara treasure.

One would have said an army of men had been employed to fill it in, for hardly more than a depression in the soil marked what had so lately been a huge pit.

"Typhoons are terrors when they let themselves loose," the sailor said grimly, "an' a craft don't have much chance even with plenty of sea-room, which wasn't the case with the two we saw last night."

"Are you going to the cove?"

"Do you think it's best? There may be many an ugly thing there which you'll be none the better for seein'."

"Let us go," Winn said curtly, trying to repress the nervous twitchings of his lips.

There was no longer any fear in the minds of either that they might meet an enemy, although it was possible, even probable, that some of the brig's crew had been left behind to keep watch at the entrance of the cave.

After all that had occurred the most bitter foes could not but be friendly while the scent of death was yet strong in the air.

Spars, broken timbers, tangled rigging and fragments of canvas covered the white sand, all giving evidence of the tragedy which had been enacted almost within hail of those who ministered to old Petro's simple wants.

"That tells the story, lad. Yonder lays the schooner's figure-head, an' jest beyond is the brig's galley; I know it by the stripe of red paint around the edges, lookin' as if the cook had wiped his hands there after a bit of butcherin'. It was almost the first thing I saw when the craft came to anchor."

"Then there can be no question but that both were wrecked, and every man——"

Winn stopped suddenly as if alarmed by the mental picture before him, and Joe said gravely:

"It's an endin' sich as sailormen must expect, an' for my part I don't think it the worst that can come to a man. But see here, lad, instead of moonin' on what's been done, s'pose we look ahead a bit? It

ain't with us as it was last night, for then it seemed as if we might be cooped up in the cave a twelve-month, with the chances that then we'd give in beaten for the sake of gettin' clear of this bloomin' island. Now it's a case of goin' when we take a fancy, an' 'cordin' to my way of thinkin', we'd best set about figgerin' how we want to start."

"Let's leave the very minute it's possible, Joe!" Winn cried excitedly, as if until that moment he had not realized what an able ally the typhoon had proven to be. "I'd rather abandon all the treasure than stay here another day!"

"I don't reckon we can put to sea quite so soon as that, an' besides, we're bound to carry away the gold whether you hanker after it or not, else how'll we keep our word with Petro?"

"What is to be done? You said the dory was good sea-boat enough to take us to Port Refuge."

"When I made sich talk I had in mind tryin' to slip away from them as was bent on holdin' us here. Now that there's nothin' to fear, we'd be bloomin' idjuts to start in an egg-shell of a craft when here's another close at our hands."

"What do you mean?" Winn asked in perplexity, looking quickly around as if expecting to see a vessel of some kind.

"With this lot of timbers we can soon put together

what'll serve to carry not only ourselves, but the treasure as well, an' then there'll be no call to come back to this place. We'll build a snug little sloop of thirty tons—or as large as we shall need—an' then if it so chances we don't find a schooner at Port Refuge for sale, we can jog along to Australia, where there ain't much doubt about gettin' what we want."

"But it'll take years to build a regular vessel."

"Not as long as you think, my hearty. First we'll turn to an' save this wreckage, an' then lay the keel of our craft. A month should be long enough for the work."

"A month!" Winn exclaimed in dismay, and then realizing that he was playing a peevish, childish part, he added with some semblance of cheeriness: "Why don't we begin the work at once, instead of sitting here idle?"

"Wait till Bartlett an' Dave come to lend a hand."

"I wonder why they are stopping so long——"

Winn ceased speaking very suddenly as the truth dawned upon him, and after a long pause he asked almost timidly:

"Are they—— Have—they——"

"I thought it was best, lad. It would do you no good, and they will bury the old man as tenderly as his own father could have done. Since it must be,

the sooner it's over the better, for our business is to care for the living, not spend time mournin' over them as have got through with all the hard knocks an' hard fare of this world."

CHAPTER XX.

SHIP-BUILDING.

WHEN Bartlett and Dave finally made their appearance there was an expression of something very like sorrow on their faces, and both advanced solemnly in an orderly fashion, as if still participating in the obsequies.

Winn asked no questions.

Even if Joe had not already explained the purpose of their remaining in the cave, the boy would have understood full well the sad business which had occupied them.

An air of constraint and sadness hovered over each member of the little party, until Joe said cheerily, almost boisterously:

"Now then, my hearties, there's work to be done, an' in plenty, if we count on leavin' this bloomin' island in ship-shape fashion. Yonder's wreckage enough, as I've just been sayin' to the lad, as will build a craft of a size to carry us an' the treasure to Port Refuge, or any other harbor where we can find a schooner what's up for sale. It ain't goin' to lay

'round this cove very long, shipmates, an' what's saved must be hauled ashore directly."

"Do you allow we can build a craft of any size unless we spend half a lifetime doin' it?" Bartlett asked, moodily, and Dave replied to the question:

"What's to hinder, mate; what's to hinder? I didn't make any objection when Joe allowed to set off in the dory, because it wasn't my place, an' though I'd most likely have gone with him if he said the word, it wouldn't have been to my likin'. Build a craft? Why, we could put together a hundred-ton schooner, if it so be there are spars enough."

"I'm countin' on a broad-beamed sloop of say thirty tons or more," Joe added, "an' if we find tools, the job should be done in a month's time."

Instead of arguing, as Bartlett appeared inclined to do, Dave went directly toward the shore, and Winn, feeling that he needed hard work to drive away the gloomy thoughts which beset him, followed close at his heels.

Soon all hands were busily engaged in drawing up from the yet turbulent waves fragments of the vessels which had been dashed to pieces against the rocky shore, and the task was lightened considerably when, having found a block and tackle, Joe made it fast to the stump of a palm tree.

By such purchase it was possible to drag the

heavier timbers from the water with comparatively little labor.

By nightfall, and none of the party had spent very much time over dinner, there was a rude collection of ropes, planks, timbers and canvas on the sand above reach of the waves, in such quantity as would give them ample material for the vessel they proposed to build.

The most important find of the day was a partially filled tool-chest from the brig.

Half a dozen sea-chests, wholly or partly filled with their late owners' effects, two casks of beef, five barrels of bread, and general stores in great variety helped make up the list of property rescued from the waves, and yet it seemed as if a like amount remained afloat in the cove or stranded on the lines of reef extending on either side.

"I reckon we may as well knock off for to-day," Joe said, when the shadows of night began to lengthen into gloom. "If all hands are as nearly pegged out as I am, it's time to turn in."

Winn, who had done his full share of the work, heard this proposition with regret.

Above all things, he shrank from entering the cavern where death was so lately a visitor, and it would have pleased him better had Joe suggested that they spend the night in the open air.

However, he was ashamed to give words to such weak fears, and followed his comrades as they made their way toward the thicket of thorn bushes, but taking good care to bring up the rear rather than remain in advance.

The evening passed less mournfully than he had feared.

After a hearty meal, of which all stood decidedly in need, the sailors, in order to distract their young comrade's attention from the past, spun yarns wherein all mention of wrecks or violent death was avoided, and almost before he was aware of the fact, Winn's eyes were closed in slumber, from which repose he did not awaken until the sun sent his cheering rays through the eastern passage to the very floor of the circular chamber.

Among the goods drawn ashore on the previous day was a small case of tinware, and Joe, opening it, had found, together with other articles, several tin vessels, one of which was now over the fire sending forth the aromatic odor of coffee.

Breakfast was prepared while the cook slept, and Winn had no more to do than take a most refreshing plunge in the now placid sea, after which he joined his mates in making a most palatable meal.

Then the work of wrecking was continued, and twice before noon came the laborers found and

buried reverentially bodies of their enemies who had been vanquished by the elements.

Thanks to the wind, which still held from the southeast, the flotsam and jetsam remained in the cove until every article which could be utilized had been drawn ashore.

"I reckon we can call the wreckin' part of our work done," Joe Savage said that evening as the four were eating supper. "To-morrow mornin' we'll lay the keel of the new craft. I don't allow she's goin' to be any great beauty, but if three sailormen can't put together what will float an' stand up under a decent show of canvas, it'll be strange. What say you, lads, how large shall we make her?"

"If you're countin' on carryin' away the treasure, the question is, what's it's bulk?" Bartlett said, and Joe was at a loss for a reply.

"That's what I can't so much as guess at. Accordin' to old Manuel's account, there was more'n five million dollars in gold an' silver. How big a pile do you think that would make?"

"Seein's I never had more than a hundred dollars at any one time in my life, I ain't any fit person to make a guess on it," Dave Carleton said with a laugh. "I'd like to know how long it'll take us to dig it up, 'cause if it isn't a big job, I'd say let's have

a look at the stuff so's to make up our minds what tonnage the new craft needs to be."

"If the hole in the ground that we saw here is any guide, there must be a pretty considerable bulk of it," Joe replied, thoughtfully. "I've never seen it myself, an' can't so much as guess how long it'll take to unearth it, though accordin' to my way of thinkin' we'd better not do much in that line until we're ready to put it aboard. Of course, even though this island is out of the track of sailin' vessels, there's no tellin' how soon some craft may come nosin' 'round, an' we'd be in a fine mess with a big pile of gold an' silver layin' 'round promiscuous-like."

"Is it buried far from the cove?" Bartlett asked.

"About the same distance as from here to the shore, I should say."

"You know where it is, of course."

"Sure, and what's more, lads, you might as well have a hint of it, seein' how I reckon you're sittin' atop of the pile this very minute."

Bartlett and Dave sprang to their feet as if in alarm, and for the first time since Petro's death Winn laughed heartily.

"The old man told us that when the time come to take it away, we should start in underneath this 'ere fire, an' if I was to have a guess at it, I'd say he had made a hole in the rock, which wouldn't be any hard

job as you can tell by whittling the wall with your knife."

"Now I can understand why he wouldn't let the captain of the brig in here," Dave exclaimed, as if a sudden thought had come to him. "Although I reckon half a dozen skippers could have laid 'round a month without suspectin' that the treasure was under their feet. The idea never come to me in all the time I've been here, an' more hours than one have I spent trying to guess where it was. How long do you reckon our crew, or the men from the brig, would have hunted over this 'ere island before so much as thinkin' the stuff mightn't be outside?"

"They'd have dug a year, unless the brig's captain had an inkling of the truth 'cause Petro wouldn't let him look 'round here; but there's no need of making so much talk about what don't concern us yet a while. How large a vessel do we need?"

"I'd say you struck it right when you allowed thirty tons would be the size. There's no need of spending any more time than is necessary, seein's how we only count on usin' her till we can buy a schooner."

"What shall we name her?" Winn asked, and Joe replied, thoughtfully:

"I hadn't thought there was any need of that, lad; but perhaps we might as well have a christenin' be-

fore we start. How does 'The Fairhaven Pride' strike you? That will kind of remind us of home, and it's a good United States name."

Winn was not particularly well pleased with the combination of words, but refrained from expressing his opinion because the other two members of the party appeared to think it particularly appropriate, and thus were two important questions settled.

From the following morning until the twenty-six days had elapsed the details of the work performed by the guardians of the Aymara treasure would prove uninteresting.

Therefore it is sufficient to set down the general results of this long time of severe and arduous labor, during which each member of the party worked most industriously throughout every hour of daylight, and gave but little heed to fatigue of body, because each hour saw them nearer the moment when they might say good-by to Cocos Island.

There was no fairer spot in the Indian Ocean, and yet to those who were virtually imprisoned upon it, almost any other place in the wide world would have been preferable, so stained with blood and peopled with ghosts of the imagination was it.

The "Fairhaven Pride" was launched on the twenty-sixth day after her keel had been laid, and, although her builders were by no means skilled la-

borers, she gave promise of being a staunch and fleet sea-boat.

Critics might have said she was too broad of beam for her length; that the heavy timbers, where light ones might have been used to better advantage, caused her to look unwieldy, and, in fact, many imperfections could be found; but those who proposed to take passage in her firmly believed that were it possible to carry her across the oceans which lay between them and their home, she would become what her name implied—the pride of Fairhaven.

"I don't lay any claim to bein' a ship carpenter," Joe Savage said when the little vessel was floating lightly on the waters of the cove, rising and falling with the gentle swell as if courtesying to the ocean to which she had just been entrusted; "but this much I hold to: There ain't three sailormen and a boy in this 'ere world that could have turned out a trimmer an' a snugger craft than this same 'Fairhaven Pride.' If it wasn't that we'd be cramped for room, so to speak, after the treasure is on board, I'd be willin' to weather Cape Horn in her, for I tell you, mates, she was built to swim, and she'll do it like a duck."

"If I could alter her in any way by only speakin', I'd keep my mouth closed mighty tight," Dave Carleton added, complacently. "'Cause why?

'Cause there ain't anything about her that you want to change."

Then Bartlett gave his opinion.

"If I'd knowed how she was goin' to turn out, I'd said let's make her about a hundred tons, an' then there wouldn't be the need of foolin' 'round this 'ere part of the world huntin' after a schooner. We might have had just what we wanted, an' not been more'n three weeks longer on the work."

Even Winn admired the result of their handiwork, although he had no words of praise just then, perhaps because his comrades had really exhausted the matter, and he turned the subject by asking:

"When are we going to start?"

"Just as soon as we can get our dunnage aboard of her," Joe replied promptly. "I reckon the Aymara treasure will answer for ballast, an' the stores are certain to make up as much of a cargo as we can carry comfortably. We must work lively, too, for once the wind hauls 'round it'll be a case of leavin' the harbor, whether we're ready or not."

"It's time to turn in," Bartlett suggested. "We'll get supper, sleep as much as we can 'twixt now an' daylight, an' then have a look at what has been buried in the cave so long."

"That's my idee, too," said Dave Carleton.

The four cast admiring glances toward the pro-

duct of their handiwork, much as though saying "Good night" to the little craft, and then went leisurely to the cavern.

The "Fairhaven Pride" had been sloop-rigged while on the ways; her canvas was neatly stowed, and every rope in place when she was launched.

The one thing needed was an anchor, and in the absence of this very essential portion of her outfit, she lay moored stem and stern to the reefs either side of the cove.

It was a snug berth so long as the wind held from any point of west, but once the breeze came from an easterly quarter she was in danger of beating herself to pieces on the rocks, and none knew better than her builders how absolutely necessary it was they should embark with the least possible delay.

When they left the shore to go to the cave, Winn believed he should fall asleep almost instantly after supper had been eaten, because of the fatigue which beset him, but in this he was mistaken.

All hands aided in preparing the evening meal, making it as elaborate as the contents of the larder would permit, and while it was being eaten Dave Carleton began to discuss the possibilities of the voyage they were so soon to make, which conversation had the effect of driving all desire for sleep from the eyes of the boy.

Nor was he the only one made wakeful by thoughts of the near future.

Each member of the party naturally had in mind the fact that should they succeed in returning home he would be wealthy beyond his wildest dreams.

With this knowledge came a new fear—that some ill fate might pursue them, and the treasure, which had been the cause of so much bloodshed, might yet provoke more, until it is little wonder that even though weary to the verge of exhaustion, all bodily weakness was forgotten.

Joe, when the meal was ended, had lain down near the fire, advising the others to follow his example.

"If we're to turn out before daybreak, there won't be any too much time to bottle up the sleep that's needed."

All hands did as he proposed, and during half an hour or more remained recumbent upon the sand; but at the end of that time a long-drawn sigh from Winn was heard, and Joe asked:

"Why don't you go to sleep, lad?"

"I can't, an' that's a fact. What with thinking of how the 'Fairhaven Pride' will behave when she's under way, or whether we can find a schooner for sale at Port Refuge, an' if we'll succeed in getting the treasure home, my eyes are open as wide as if I had just wakened after a twelve-hour nap."

"That's the kind of a box I'm in," Dave Carleton said emphatically as he arose to a sitting posture. "I might lay here till mornin' an' never come nearer bein' asleep than I am this minute."

Bartlett sprang to his feet.

"Since we all seem to be in about the same shape, what's the use of layin' idle? There's work to be done, an' plenty of it, for no man can say how long it's safe for the sloop to remain in the cove. Instead of idlin' away the time in this useless fashion, why not get to work again?"

"What can we do in the dark?" Winn asked.

"Build a fire on the other side an' unearth the treasure. If any man grows sleepy while we're at the job, let him lay down; but them as can't close their eyes keep at it, an' by to-morrow mornin' we'll be just so much nearer gettin' under way. I've been figgerin' over this five-million-dollar business, an' it strikes me it'll take a good many trips 'twixt here an' the cove for us to carry down that much money."

"It ain't a bad idea," and Joe also arose to his feet. "As you say, we can lay down whenever we're inclined for a snooze, an' it'll be a big savin' of time."

Winn set about building the fire; Bartlett and Dave went to the cove for tools with which to dig, and Joe extinguished the embers that marked the hiding-place of the Aymara treasure.

When all were in the cavern once more, and it is safe to say not one was free from a certain nervous tremor as he believed this wealth of the Aymaras was about to be uncovered for the second time in three-quarters of a century, Joe outlined the method of work.

"There's no reason why we should do any more work than's necessary. We'll throw up this 'ere sand toward the tunnel that leads to the shore, an' if the whole passage is blocked before we get through it won't make any great difference. I'll begin here, push it back as far as I can reach; Dave will shove it on a bit further, and Bartlett wind up the job. Winn's part is to keep the fire bright, so we can see what we're about."

The men stationed themselves as Joe had suggested, and everything was in readiness for the beginning of the work, yet the sailor remained motionless.

"Why are you hangin' fire?" Dave asked, impatiently. "You don't allow it's goin' to pop right out simply because you're standin' there waitin' to see it, eh?"

"I'm a fool, that's what's the matter with me—a regular old maid. Do you know, mates, there's no more strength in my arms this minute than if I was a baby."

"What has come over you?"

"I can't help thinkin' about them as have gone into the other world through tryin' to get hold of this 'ere treasure, an' here we are, ready to dig it up with nothin' to prevent. It seems like as though something must happen before we get through with the job."

"And so there will, if you don't make haste," Bartlett cried, impatiently. "The wind will come up from the eastward, the 'Fairhaven Pride' will be knocked about on the reef until there ain't so much left of her as you could put in your eye, and we'll be held on this 'ere island till we starve to death."

Sharp words were what Joe needed to clear from his brain the forebodings which had momentarily unnerved him, and in another instant he fell to work with a will.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE AYMARA TREASURE.

EVEN had the work of unearthing the Aymara treasure been begun in the daylight, there would have been a certain feeling of awe in Winn's breast because of all that had occurred in connection with that famous hoard.

Now, however, as the men silently commenced their labors in the glare of the firelight, their shadows dancing in grotesque fashion on the white wall opposite, the low moaning of the sea without, and the flickering of the flames which distorted every object in the chamber, affected him much more seriously than it had Joe Savage.

During the first few moments of the work he trembled violently, casting frightened glances here and there, as if really believing the cavern might be haunted by the ghosts of those who had given up their lives while protecting or while unlawfully trying to gain possession of the treasure.

During five minutes or more no one spoke, and it seemed to Winn as if it was necessary he should hear a human voice, otherwise his terror would become too great to admit of his remaining in the chamber.

In fact, more than once was he tempted to flee from, he knew not what—to go, he knew not where.

Then Joe Savage spoke, and never had the sailor's voice sounded more sweetly to the nervous boy's ears.

"Petro must have done a heap of work in the burying of this 'ere gold. I'm down a couple of feet into the sand, and there's no sign of it yet."

"Are you certain this is the spot where he told you to dig?" Dave asked suddenly, and involuntarily pausing, the three men looked at each other in dismay.

The same thought was in the mind of each.

Suppose Petro, believing it necessary for the safety of the treasure, had deceived even those whom he professed to trust? Suppose, instead of being concealed in the chamber, the hoard was elsewhere on the island?

In such case a lifetime might be spent in vain search, and yet they had at their disposal no more hours than the wind should blow from the westward.

"See here, this won't do, mates!" Joe said, mentally gathering himself together with an effort. "It's worse than foolishness, standing here fearing old Petro deceived us, when by a little work we'll soon know the truth. This 'ere sand can't be of any very great depth, unless he carted a lot in from the

shore, and that the old man never would have done unless he had a precious good reason."

The labor was resumed, and now that there had arisen in his mind a doubt as to whether they would find the treasure, Winn ceased to be nervous or timid regarding it.

He piled the wood higher upon the coals until it sent forth a ruddy blaze, which, reflected by the white walls of the cavern, made a light almost as at noon-day, save for the deep, fantastic shadows cast by the workmen.

Ten minutes more were spent in forcing the sand from the centre of the chamber into the eastern tunnel with shovels fashioned from bits of plank, and nothing had been found to indicate that the wealth which they sought was hidden there.

Dave Carleton suddenly ceased his labor, and instantly his companions followed the example.

"It don't stand to reason he covered this 'ere cave with four feet of sand, and we're down as deep as that now."

"We won't doubt the old man yet a while," Joe said, speaking with an unsteady voice. "If you and me was to bury five million dollars, Dave, we'd take precious good care it was put down so deep that the first loafer who came along couldn't kick it up."

"Don't stop to talk," Bartlett said, hoarsely.

"Keep on with the work. It brings a cold sweat out on me just thinkin' we may be on the wrong scent, an' I can't stand still till we know the truth."

Again the work was resumed, and this time Joe pushed away the sand with feverish energy, as if each moment was of vital importance.

Finally, when they were least expecting it, the sailor gave vent to a yell which awoke all the echoes of the place, as he fell on his knees and began digging frantically with both hands.

"We have found it, lads! We have found it! Petro didn't deceive us, for this must be it!"

The two men and Winn had run at the first outcry to Joe's side, and crowding around where he crouched, half buried in the excavation, they saw that with his hands he had cleared away the sand from the head of a small oaken cask.

It was as if all four ceased to breathe for a moment, and then Dave shouted hysterically:

"Up with it, mate! up with it! Let's make certain there's really gold here!"

Joe tugged and strained in vain.

Because of the sand which had lodged around it, filling all the crevices between this one and, as was soon ascertained, several others, he could no more have lifted it out unaided than he could have forced in the walls of the cavern by leaning against them.

"We have got to have a block and tackle here, mates. No four men can get that out with nothin' but their hands."

"Petro must have put it in alone."

"Aye, so he did. He had only to roll it in, but we can't pull it up without a purchase of some kind, unless it so be we dig away the sand until the entire excavation is laid bare. You an' Bartlett go down to the cove, Dave, an' bring up what'll answer our purpose. Winn an' I'll keep on with the diggin'."

When the two sailors had obeyed it was literally impossible for Joe and the boy to do as had been promised.

The knowledge that they had really come upon the treasure, for there was no doubt in the minds of either but that the casks contained the hoard of the Aymaras, brought with it such extreme agitation that they were absolutely helpless in their weakness.

"Of course these casks must be filled with gold," Winn stammered.

"Aye, lad, so old Manuel said—gold and silver. It's hard to believe that you, a boy from the Fairhaven poor-farm and me, a sailorman as has thought himself well off to get thirty dollars a month for leadin' a dog's life, should be sittin' here as part owners of more than five millions of money."

"It won't do us much good until we get it away

from this island," Winn replied with a hysterical laugh.

"True enough, lad; but it's only a question of time now. Once we get this aboard the 'Fairhaven Pride' it's ours, even if the wind comes in from the eastward five minutes later, an' before we've had time to put the provisions aboard. We'll set sail an' take chances of starvin' rather than—— I've heard tell of men goin' money mad, an' I believe that kind of a fever's getting the best of me jest now," Joe concluded, with a dry laugh. "We must hold ourselves in, Winn, for we're fast gettin' on a level with Bart Gerry, who was willin' to give up his soul for what's comin' to us so easy."

Then the two stared at each other in silence until the footsteps and conversation of the men as they returned with the block and tackle broke the spell which bound them, and instantly they were cool, calculating workmen once more.

Three short fragments of spars were also brought to serve as a derrick, and when the tackle had been put in position it was a simple matter to raise the first cask from its resting-place.

The weight told that it must be filled with some metal as heavy as gold; but this was not of sufficient assurance for the guardians of the treasure.

The head of the cask was knocked in, and the four

stood around it speechless, gazing at the ingots of dull yellow.

Like one beside himself, Joe threw these out, uttering short, sharp cries as of frenzy, until the white sand which formed the floor of the cavern was covered with ingots, loose coin or vessels of various shapes, all of the same precious metal.

Then, regardless of the fact that every moment of time must be utilized if they would save this hoard, the four gave themselves wholly up to that delirium which the sudden acquisition of gold oftentimes brings.

Bartlett played with the ingots as a child might with pebbles; Dave stacked the coins up one by one until they toppled over with a clinking sound, which caused him to laugh again and again. Winn placed the oddly shaped vessels side by side, admiring each in turn, and tapping them with his pocket knife to make certain they gave forth the true ring, while Joe moved to and fro unsteadily, now plunging his arms to the elbows amid the ingots, and again drinking deep draughts of water from one of the vessels.

It was a scene which had in it a most serious lesson, but none who took part read aught therein.

They only knew that here was that which would enrich them in this world's goods far beyond any previous desire, and for the moment it was sufficient.

Winn was the first to regain his senses, and he aroused the others to a thorough understanding by saying sharply:

"If we're going to play with this gold all night, it'll be a mighty poor way of spending the time, when no one knows how soon we may have to leave the island. There will be a chance to make fools of ourselves after we're on board the 'Fairhaven Pride,' heading for Port Refuge."

"You're right, lad," Joe replied, gravely. "We've shown ourselves to be worse than fools, and it's time we stood 'round on the other tack. Brace up lively, boys; we'll put back everything, save the coin, that we'll need to pay for the schooner we count on buyin', and then set about gettin' the rest of the casks out. Only two can work to advantage here, but the others can be rollin' the stuff down to the cove. I shall feel easier in mind when it's stored in the sloop's hold."

His tone as much as his words had the effect of sobering Bartlett and Dave, and five minutes later all traces of excitement had vanished as the work of transferring the Aymara treasure was really begun.

All hands were now working with a will.

When the second cask had been hoisted out Bartlett began to roll it to the cove.

The first one Dave took charge of, and the work

was carried on until the last of the precious packages had been taken from the cavern.

During all this while no one so much as thought of the passage of time, and not until the entire hoard was stowed as ballast in the hold of the "Fairhaven Pride" did they realize that the night had passed and another day had been half spent in this labor.

"If anybody'd said I'd ever have so much money as would make me forget to go to sleep, or eat breakfast, or feel hungry for dinner, I'd have called him a bloomin' liar," Joe exclaimed when he realized how many hours had been spent in the transferring of the hoard. "I don't know whether it's the handlin' of so much gold, or the thought that I'm what you can call a rich man that has put me in this condition; but, to tell the truth, mates, I never'd know from my own feelin' that I hadn't been asleep."

"I allow there ain't a man in the world what's so cold-blooded that he wouldn't be knocked out of his reckonin' by going through what we've been through with since last night," Bartlett added. "I tell you, mates, I've been uneasy to get away ever since we landed on this 'ere island; but all I've felt up to this time isn't any more'n a notion compared with what's struck me now. I believe I'd go nigh crazy if I slept in that cave again. What say to shippin' the provisions 'twixt now an' sunrise an'

turnin' in aboard? Then, if the wind comes up, it's only a question of slippin' cables, an' we're off, walkin' the decks with the Aymara treasure just below our feet."

"It can be done," Joe said, thoughtfully, "for I allow 'twixt now an' sunset we'll put aboard all that's worth carrying away. It's mighty lucky we saved the dory, mates; for if we'd had to raft the gold out from the shore it wouldn't be aboard yet."

"That's so," said Bartlett.

"Never mind the figuring on that," Winn said, impatiently. "Let's provision the sloop. I'm willin' to work until to-morrow morning rather than knock off again before it's finished."

"An' I allow we're gettin' just as crazy now as when we first saw the gold," Dave interrupted. "Not one of us has had so much as a bite since last night, an' it'll only be treating our bodies right to hold on long enough for dinner."

"Winn can build a fire on shore and cook whatever comes handiest, while we keep on with the work," Joe replied, and to this his comrades agreed.

Probably there had never been such a scene of activity on the shores of the cove.

Nearby, covered with canvas saved from the wrecks, was a large store of provisions which Joe and Bartlett began loading into the dory for ship-

ment to the sloop, while Dave traveled back and forth between the cave and the shore, bringing from their old place of refuge such of the cooking utensils as it was deemed best to carry away.

The sun was not more than two hours high when Winn summoned his comrades to dinner, and the time spent in eating the meal was sufficient to enable the laborers to realize how thoroughly fatigued they were.

Bartlett, who had claimed that he could not sleep on the island another night, proposed that they "knock off until morning" rather than continue while he was so completely "used up," and Dave seemed disposed to agree to this proposal until Joe said sharply:

"Now, see here, mates, it's a matter of four or five hours more, an' the work will be done. Then, knowing we're ready to leave our moorin' at any minute we can go to sleep, feelin' that things are ship-shape for the cruise which we'll hope ends only when we drop anchor in Fairhaven Bay. I ain't sayin' as there's any good cause for believin' the wind won't hold westerin' a good while longer; but why take chances when we've got so near through with the job? I'm fagged out, an' no mistake; but it ain't goin' to kill me to keep movin' from now till sunset."

Winn shared this opinion, and once more the arduous labor was resumed.

Not until the last barrel of ship's bread had been put on board; two beef casks emptied of their contents, rinsed thoroughly, filled with water, and lashed to the decks amidships—not until then did the guardians of the Aymara treasure cease their labors, and, wearied almost to the verge of exhaustion, each threw himself upon the deck, heedless alike of the dews of the night and the hardness of the bed, in his desire for slumber.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HOME PORT.

THE sun awakened the crew of the "Fairhaven Pride" next morning, but not until he was fully above the eastern horizon, and then it was they realized how severe had been their exertions during the past twenty-four hours.

Stiff and sore in every joint, Winn began overhauling the stores, for there was little to do in this work of preparing breakfast, save set out the provisions, since, although laden with gold, the sloop did not so much as boast of the smallest cook-stove.

"A pannikin of coffee is what we most need now," Joe said, after watching the boy a few seconds. "An' seein's how there's nothin' to prevent, suppose we pull ashore for breakfast? It's likely to be the last warm meal we'll have this side of Keeling Island."

Bartlett showed that he approved of the plan by at once loading into the dory such utensils and stores as would be needed in the preparation of the meal, and shortly afterward the little party, seated on the

sand, were partaking of the last breakfast they were likely ever to eat on Cocos Island.

Then came the question as to whether they should set sail at once or wait until the breeze had freshened, when the run could be made more quickly.

Time was of considerable importance in the navigation of the sloop, for they had not so much as a compass, and after Cocos should be lost to view it would be necessary to sail by guess-work.

"I go in for leavin' this bloomin' place as soon as we can cast off the hawsers," Dave Carleton said, decidedly. "If you're certain whereabouts Keeling lays, we ought to be sailormen enough to keep the points of the compass in our heads for four an' twenty hours, by which time, accordin' to your reckonin', we should make the land."

"I'll go bail that I've got a picture of the chart in my eye this blessed minute, an' it would be strange if it wasn't there, seein's how I studied over the course nigh on to two days before leavin' the schooner," Joe replied. "We can't have everything to please us, though it would help along wonderfully if the wind was a little stronger; but s'posen we wait till a gale blows up? What then?"

"Wouldn't the sloop weather it?" Winn asked.

"Aye, lad, she'd do that stoutly enough; but we mightn't be able to keep our reckonin', so perhaps

the best we can do is to agree with Dave, an' slip our cables as soon as we get on board."

Not one of the party felt inclined to linger in this port, although they had entered it poor in purse and were leaving it with a vast amount of wealth.

Therefore the voyage was begun without delay.

The three men cheered loudly when the "Fairhaven Pride," with all her sails set—two jibs, mainsail and a rude topsail—glided gently out of the cove; but Winn was silent.

The memories which insisted on having a place in his mind at this moment caused a feeling of sadness rather than of triumph.

"Pull yourself together, lad!" Joe cried, cheerily, as he noted the look on the boy's face. "This is a time when all of us should be feelin' mighty good, for we've got out of as tight a fix as sailormen ever ran into, an' in such shape as didn't seem possible even on the day we left Fairhaven."

"I couldn't help thinking of Manuel, of Petro, and the wrecks," Winn said, half apologetically.

"This is the time when you should be chewin' over somethin' pleasant. Watch this 'ere bloomin' sloop, an' if that don't make you feel good, I don't know what will. Why, my boy, she's a reg'lar clipper, an' I'd like to see them as could build a better one with the same tools an' timbers we had. It's a shame to

think of abandonin' a craft like this an' puttin' out good money for one that most likely can't sail half as fast."

"Do you believe this sloop would stand a voyage around the Horn?" Winn asked, thus showing that the sad current of his thoughts had been changed.

Joe shook his head.

"Well, lad, I'm not so bloomin' certain of that. If it wasn't for the sake of sailin' into Fairhaven harbor on board our own vessel, I'd say we could make San Francisco harbor in her."

"But what could we do with the treasure?"

"Turn it into cash, which can be carried easier, an' that's a port where it could be done in great shape, for a few millions in gold an' silver don't cut any great figger there, while I'm allowin' it will make considerable of a stir in New York."

"Then why not do as you say?"

"It's like this, lad; I've elected myself captain of the party, so to speak, though I don't allow to do any great amount of bossin', an' it'll be worth almost as much as my share of the treasure to sail into Fairhaven on board a craft I own. Then again, we've got to call into Venezuela to find Telceda's crowd, so I reckon we'd best keep her headed for Keeling."

It was destined that the first and only cruise which the guardians of the treasure were to take in a craft

of their own making was to be short and free from excitement.

Had the sloop's crew been able to command the weather, they could have had no more favoring breeze.

During the following forenoon they sailed into the harbor of Port Refuge, Dave Carleton regretting most sincerely the absence of flags.

"This is the time when the sloop ought to be dressed from truck to rail, an' then we'd stand the chance of cuttin' a dash in this 'ere settlement."

"Which is jest what we don't want to do," Bartlett replied. Accordin' to my way of thinkin', we'd best sneak in an' out without attractin' too much attention, for if it was known what kind of a cargo we're carryin', I'm thinkin' we wouldn't hold possession of it many hours. Better get an anchor an' a cook-stove before we feel bad 'bout not bein' able to spread ourselves."

In the absence of the first-named article, it was necessary the sloop be run as near the shore as was safe, and then brought up into the wind, when Joe, his pockets well lined with gold pieces, went ashore in the dory to purchase that which was so sadly needed.

The little craft stood off and on until an hour later, when the self-elected captain reappeared, ac-

companied by three porters, who staggered under their heavy burden.

"It ain't very much of an anchor he's got, if three men can carry it," Dave grumbled, and Bartlett reminded him that it would answer as a mooring for the sloop during fair weather.

"It ain't sich a terrible easy matter to pick up ship's stores in a port like this," Joe said as he pulled alongside. "I've got a kedge that'll serve till mornin' I reckon, an' I'm promised somethin' better then."

"Did you happen to ask if there was any show for buyin' a schooner?"

"I did, my hearty, an' found that by layin' here a week or two we're likely to get what'll suit us. Three hundred tons—eight years old—A1 condition, an' off on a tradin' voyage now."

"What's the price?"

"They're askin' fifteen thousand dollars, but I don't allow that cuts any very great figger with men like us."

When the sloop had been moored the self-elected captain offered to stand watch while his comrades went on shore; but no one accepted the proposition.

They had had quite enough of the land for the time being, and their one desire was to be afloat, homeward bound.

Before the day had come to an end a stove was set up in the cabin of the sloop, a certain amount of bedding brought on board, and a most bountiful supply of fresh meat and fruit purchased.

"There's no need of our goin' hungry or lackin' anything we take a fancy to," Joe, who had acted as steward, said in a tone of satisfaction. "We'll have an anchor out here by to-morrow noon that will hold us, no matter what weather comes, and now we may as well take things comfortable-like. If anybody wants to go ashore, all right, 'cause this 'ere crew is bound to do as they please, except that one of us must be on watch all the time."

The ten days which followed were not spent as enjoyably as would have been the case under other circumstances.

There was nothing to disturb the guardians of the treasure in any way, and much of interest might have been seen on the island, but for the fact that no one was willing to leave the treasure-laden sloop, save during brief intervals.

Then they awakened one morning to find the good schooner "Petrel" anchored not more than half a cable's length away, and Joe pointed her out as the one he had proposed to purchase.

"Better make the trade as soon as you can," Dave Carleton said, after eyeing her critically. "She'll

answer us to a dot, an' we couldn't ask for anything better."

Four days later the purchase was made, and Joe, who had represented himself as one of a shipwrecked crew which had been cast ashore on Cocos Island, had no little difficulty in explaining how it was he chanced to be in possession of so many Spanish gold pieces, coined in the earlier years of the century.

"The owners put the question to me point blank," he said when describing the interview. "I began to be afraid they'd find out more than it might be convenient for them to know."

"How did you answer their questions?"

Joe smiled knowingly.

"I didn't. I says to 'em, says I, 'Here's your cash, an' it's all in gold pieces. If you don't want 'em, say the word, an' we'll put for some other port where they're willin' to sell a vessel without wantin' to know the pedigree of the men what buys her.' That made 'em draw in their horns, an' then they begun a lot of soft palaverin' to worm the secret out of me; but all I did was to say, 'If you don't want the gold, we'll end this bargainin' mighty quick.' The 'Petrel' is held now by us four in our own proper names, an' the papers will be made out as soon as may be. I reckon, however, I'll have another tussle with them chaps before the business is finished, for

it stands to reason they're beginnin' to have an inklin' of the truth."

And Joe did have a "tussle."

The former owners of the "Petrel" plied him with questions regarding the gold, offering almost every inducement if he would tell them whence it came. But all to no purpose.

He was willing to talk with them on matters pertaining to the sea, but instantly the conversation turned to Spanish coins his mouth was closed, nor would he so much as offer the slightest explanation as to how the gold had come into his possession.

The secret was safe with Joe.

When all the necessary formalities had been complied with the "Fairhaven Pride" was hauled alongside the "Petrel," and during the day Joe and his crew made a great show of transferring their stores of provisions to the schooner.

It was not until nightfall, however, that the treasure was disturbed, and then, after making certain there were no curious ones in the vicinity, the four set about removing their precious cargo.

When the sun rose again it was stowed snugly beneath the stores of spare canvas and rope.

A plentiful supply of provisions was taken on board, and then came the question of how the "Petrel" could be navigated when none of her

owners had any save the most cursory knowledge of that art.

It was absolutely essential an experienced master be engaged, one who would sail the vessel under Joe's direction, and such a man was at hand in the person of the first mate of a whaling-ship, who, three months before, had come ashore, the sole survivor of his crew.

He offered to navigate the "Petrel" without wages, in order to reach his home; but to this Joe would not listen.

"You will take master's pay or stay where you are, so far as we're concerned. All we want is that you put the schooner first off the coast of Venezuela, an' then into Fairhaven harbor without workin' yourself up to a fit 'cause we don't feel called upon to explain everything about ourselves."

That settled the matter.

The master was the only addition made to the crew, and it is possible to fill as many pages as have already been given to the story of the treasure of Cocos Island, in relating the incidents of the homeward voyage; but it would be simply a sequel to the main purpose of this tale.

Suffice it to say that in due time the schooner "Petrel" was brought to an anchorage off Cuman, where Manuel had met the survivors of his people,

and there was the treasure divided according to the directions he had already given.

Winn was the one delegated to meet these representatives of the Aymara race, and to his surprise the business did not prove to be difficult.

Once the schooner was brought to an anchor a canoe put off from the shore, and the crew of the "Petrel" heard the name "Manuel Telceda" called softly as the light craft circled around the vessel.

After this it was a simple task to make known their business, and within two hours the guardians of the treasure were on shore in consultation with the relatives of Manuel and Petro.

The four descendants whom Telceda had met were yet alive, and on being told how he proposed to divide the treasure, insisted it should be done exactly as he suggested.

For certain reasons, chiefest among which is the fact that both Joe and Winn object to have the amount of their wealth made public, it is not well to state all the particulars of this division.

It is enough to say that when the four owners of the "Petrel" sailed into Fairhaven harbor each was the owner of more silver and gold than he had ever believed any one person could amass, and, as may not be truthfully said of some large fortunes, it was all come by honestly.

How Winn and his companions employed this vast wealth cannot be related here, but at some future time, if the readers so elect, a faithful account shall be given of what befell the four partners after they had brought home the treasure from Cocos Island.

[THE END.]

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